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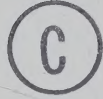
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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

LABOR UNREST IN EDMONTON AND DISTRICT AND ITS COVERAGE BY
THE EDMONTON PRESS: 1918 - 1919

by



WILLIAM R. ASKIN

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
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ABSTRACT

Subsequent to 1915, a wave of labor unrest swept through Canada. This unrest was the result of long working hours and high prices, two consequences of World War I. Labor unrest was especially acute in the West. Frequency of strike action and growth of trade union membership reveal that this unrest increased dramatically from 1916 until a climax was reached in 1919.

The formation of the One Big Union and the Winnipeg General Strike affected Edmonton. Here, branches of the O.B.U. were established and, in May, 1919, a general sympathetic strike occurred. The purpose of the Edmonton strike was to demonstrate solidarity with the strikers of Winnipeg. Edmonton, with a population under 60,000, did not experience a dramatic work stoppage such as that which occurred in Manitoba's capital. Upon first reflection, it would appear that the relatively small size of Edmonton, and its location within a primarily agricultural environment, were the principle reasons why the strike was short in duration and did not terminate in a climate of hostility and repression such as was experienced at Winnipeg. In depth research demonstrates, however, that other significant factors must be considered.

The Edmonton sympathetic strike occurred in a city under the control of a mayor who, along with many aldermen,

Subsequent to 1975, a wave of labor unrest swept through Canada. This unrest was the result of long working hours and high prices, two consequences of World War I. Labor unrest was especially acute in the West. Frequency of strike action and growth of trade union membership reveal that this unrest expressed dynamically from 1918 until a

climate was reached in 1919.

The formation of the One Big Union and the Winnipeg

General Strike of 1919. These strikes, however, of the O.B.U. were unsuccessful and, in May, 1919, a general sympathy

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strike was called. When this strike failed, it would appear that the relatively small size of Edmonton, and the location within a primarily agricultural environment, were the principal reasons why the strike was short in duration and did not develop into a climate of hostility and repression such as was experienced at Winnipeg. In fact, research demon-

strates, however, that other significant factors must be

considered.

The Edmonton sympathetic strike occurred in a city under the control of a mayor who, along with many others,

were responsive to the aspirations of organized labor. Through the vehicle of the Dominion Labor Party, organized labor was actively involved in civic politics. The Edmonton Trades and Labor Council, in which most union locals were represented, was dominated by men who advocated political action through the means of the D.L.P. This leadership remained loyal to their "international" craft unions at a time when many Canadian workers were switching their allegiances to the One Big Union.

Unlike in Winnipeg and Vancouver, O.B.U. adherents in Edmonton were unable to wrest control of trade union structures from such a leadership. A "purge" of O.B.U. proponents within the E.T. & L.C. was the reason for this, and, at the time of the May, 1919 sympathetic strike, a trade council dominated by "loyalists" was able to direct the course taken by labor during the action.

The Edmonton daily press, while extending considerable coverage to the labor unrest of the 1918-1919 period, gave, in many cases, an unreliable account of trade union activity. For this reason, Part One of this thesis is a narrative history of organized labor in Edmonton and district prior to 1920. In Part Two, press coverage of labor unrest is analyzed. This analysis has demonstrated the influence the press had on the image enjoyed by various components of organized labor in 1918-1919, and the influence the press had on the actions of trade unionists themselves

at that time. That the "loyalist" upholders of "international" craft unionism were able to retain their control over the course of events in 1919 was due, to no small extent, to the active intervention of the daily press into the activities of the labor movement.

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William R. Askin

April 16, 1973

ABBREVIATIONS

A. F. of L.	: Alberta Federation of Labor or American Federation of Labor as indicated.
B. R. C.	: International Brotherhood of Railway and Steamship Clerks, Freight Handlers, Express and Station Employees.
C. F. L.	: Canadian Federation of Labor
C. B. R. E.	: Canadian Brotherhood of Railway Employees.
E. T. & L. C.	: Edmonton Trades and Labor Council.
I. W. W.	: Industrial Workers of the World.
O. B. U.	: One Big Union
W. F. M.	: Western Federation of Miners

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PART ONE

STUDY OF THE LABOR MOVEMENT IN EDMONTON
AND DISTRICT WITH EMPHASIS UPON THE 1918-1919
PERIOD

Chapter I

TRENDS IN THE EDMONTON AREA AFFECTING THE LABOR MOVEMENT PRIOR TO 1916

Industrialization

Until World War I, Edmonton was essentially a commercial, governmental, service, and distribution centre located within a primarily agrarian province. Some secondary industry existed, but did not engage the labor of a large number of persons. The unionized working force in this agrarian milieu was not large, consisting of skilled and semi-skilled craftsmen, although unionized unskilled laborers existed.

Railway construction facilitated labor organization. Calgary and Strathcona were joined by rail as of August, 1891, by the Calgary and Edmonton Railway Company -- soon to be acquired by the C.P.R. The C.P.R. line did not reach north Edmonton until the high level bridge was built in 1913, but in 1905 the Canadian Northern Railway gave Edmonton direct access to Eastern Canada. Similarly, the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway gave Edmonton additional access to Eastern Canada as of September, 1909. The two transcontinental railways at later periods gave Edmonton access to the Pacific coast, the Canadian Northern reaching Vancouver in 1916, and the G.T.P. reaching Prince Rupert in 1914. In addition to numerous spur lines emanating from the transcontinentals, shorter railroads as the Alberta and Great

Waterways Railway, linking Edmonton with the western Peace River region, added to Edmonton's importance as a transportation centre.¹

First to be unionized on the railways were engineers, conductors, firemen, and trainmen -- the "running trades" -- and these were organized into craft unions often non-affiliated with either the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada (the T.L.C.) or the American Federation of Labor (A.F.L.).² Not until later were more "plebian" elements -- the men of the "running trades" tended to assume elitist attitudes -- organized into additional craft unions as the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees, a union which was affiliated to both the A.F.L. and T.L.C.³ An important force in organizing numerous railway workers was the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway Employees, founded in 1908 and conceived as being a "purely national railway Labour union" organized "on an industrial basis."⁴ While much of this organization was at first confined to eastern Canada, and while initial organizing campaigns were abortive in the West, the C.B.R.E. was to have considerable membership in

¹John Blue, Alberta Past and Present, Vol. 1, Historical and Biographical (Chicago: Pioneer Historical Publishing Co., 1924), pp. 314-317.

²W. E. Greening and M. M. Maclean, It Was Never Easy, 1908-1958: A History of the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway, Transport and General Workers (Ottawa: Mutual Press Ltd., 1961), p. 1.

³Ibid., pp. 1-2.

⁴Ibid., p. 7.

the Edmonton area by the end of World War I.⁵

Years before they had affiliated with the Edmonton Trades and Labor Council, railway unions were functioning in Edmonton. The Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees was first referred to in the Council's minutes of March 15, 1909.⁶ As the Grand Trunk Pacific R.R. approached Edmonton, the Edmonton T. & L.C. developed a critical concern about employment of orientals in the construction of the railway.⁷ When white, Anglo-Celtic labor became more prevalent on the G.T.P., union organizers took a greater interest in organizing construction and maintenance workers on the Grand Trunk. The E.T. & L. C. minutes of October 3, 1910, hence refer to the "vile condition obtaining in the construction camps of the G.T.P. west of the city."⁸ Apparently, the Brotherhood of Carpenters was encountering vigorous opposition from management while attempting to organize construction workers. The minutes of November 7, 1910 indicated that a local of the Brotherhood of Railway Carmen had been organized at the G.T.P. yards, and "hoped to get them[selves] affiliated with the Council at an early date."⁹

⁵Edmonton Free Press, May 31, 1919, p. 3.

By May, 1919, there were at least 206 members of the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway Employees, about 10% of the organized working force of Edmonton.

⁶Edmonton Trades and Labor Council, Minutes, March 15, 1909.

⁷Ibid., September 30, 1909.

⁸Ibid., October 3, 1910.

⁹Ibid., November 7, 1910.

A local of the International Association of Machinists had sought affiliation with the E.T. & L.C. in March, 1909.¹⁰ The machinists and their helpers were employed mainly at railway shops in Edmonton. The latter were slower in attaining union protection. The question of which union would service their needs involved considerable discussion in the Council, and it was finally decided that "the Machinists Helpers [sic] be organized as a Federal Labor Union [Local], under the A.F. of L. [American Federation of Labor charter], and that the Machinists delegates be asked to act on the Organizing Committee on this matter."¹¹

About one-third of organized labor in Edmonton, by 1919, was directly or indirectly employed within the railway industry.¹² Much of the influx of railway workers into unions occurred during World War I and the early post-war period. The development of the railway industry was paralleled by the development of the coal-mining industry in northern Alberta.

The Edmonton coal formation was a source of primarily lignite coals, but some sub-bituminous and bituminous grades existed west of Edmonton towards the foothills.¹³ Unionized coal miners in the Edmonton area were part of

¹⁰ Ibid., March 1, 1909.

¹¹ Ibid., January 16, 1911.

¹² Edmonton Free Press, May 31, 1919, p. 3.

¹³ Blue, op. cit., p. 364.

District No. 18 of the United Mine Workers of America. This district was formed on November 9, 1903 and included all Alberta and mainland British Columbia.¹⁴ As of November 18, 1907 a local of the U.M.W.A. gained affiliation with the Edmonton Trades and Labor Council. Delegates to the Trades Council reported a membership of about 350 and that employment opportunities at local mines were good, especially for experienced miners.¹⁵ On July 20, 1908 it was reported to the Council that the Parkdale coal mine was the only thoroughly unionized mine in the Edmonton district.¹⁶ By October 18, 1909, Twin City and Ritchie Coal Co. were reported as being two additional coal companies completely organized.¹⁷

It was predictable that the organization of construction workers would occur during Edmonton's formative years. Hence, when representatives of various union locals met at Unity Hall on December 2, 1905 "...to consider the formation of a central body representing the trade unions of the city," delegates consisted of plumbers, typographers, lathers, bricklayers, and carpenters.¹⁸ During the following year, painters, cigarmakers, tinnners, hod carriers, barbers, joiners, and laborers gained representation on the

¹⁴Ibid., p. 384.

¹⁵Edmonton Trades and Labor Council, Minutes, November 18, 1907.

¹⁶Ibid., July 20, 1908.

¹⁷Ibid., October 18, 1909.

¹⁸Ibid., December 2, 1905.

Edmonton Trades and Labor Council. Edmonton printers, represented by the Typographers Union, were pioneers in Edmonton union organization, having formed a local in 1903.¹⁹

Apart from the printing trades and a few other skilled crafts, workers in the building trades predominated within the E.T. & L.C. for its first several years.

Urbanization

The process of urbanization within Edmonton and district was interrelated with the processes of industrialization and unionization. Urbanization involved construction of homes, plants, and commercial enterprises as well as the building of urban transportation systems (such as the street railway system). It is important to note that, while urbanization led to increased trade union organization, union membership in no way kept pace with Edmonton's spectacular population growth from 1901 to 1921.

¹⁹Blue, op. cit., p. 390.

Table 1
Population of Edmonton: 1901-1921*

<u>1901</u>	<u>1906</u>	<u>1911</u>	<u>1916</u>	<u>1921</u>
4,176	14,088	31,064	53,846	58,821

<u>Population of Edmonton</u>	<u>Population of Strathcona</u>
1901 -- 2,626	1901 -- 1,550
1911 -- 24,900	1911 -- 5,579

*Includes the population of Strathcona which amalgamated with Edmonton in 1912.

Sources:

Canada Year Book (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1912, 1921).

The rapid growth of Edmonton's population was due, in addition to the arrival of transcontinental railways, to the selection of the city as Alberta's capital and its position as a point of departure for northern exploration and development. The homesteading of agricultural lands in the Edmonton area naturally facilitated the city's status as an agricultural centre.

In Alberta, during the 1901-1921 period, urban population did not challenge the supremacy of the rural component of the provincial population. Appendix #1 demonstrates that the percentage of the total population which was urban increased from 26.1% to 37.9% in this twenty

years.²⁰ The increasing importance of the urbanized areas is hence indicated. Nevertheless, the essentially agrarian nature of the Province is also indicated, and this is of some importance when labor unrest during World War I and afterwards is considered. Strike activity in 1918 and 1919 occurred in a milieu dominated by the agrarian mentality which stressed hard work and individual enterprise. Such an outlook would naturally lead many farmers to maintain a suspicious, or even hostile, attitude towards the aspirations of organized labor even though the Alberta farmer, himself, had ample reason for discontent during and after World War I.

While considering demographic factors, it is useful to note the ethnic composition of Alberta's population since Edmonton's work force reflected with some degree of accuracy the ethnic derivation of the provincial population. Appendix #2 demonstrates that the vast majority of the population was born in Canada, the U.S., or the British Isles wherein English was the usual language spoken and Anglo-Celtic the main ethnic stock. While persons from non-Anglo-Celtic backgrounds were often employed in mines, on railway construction, and on farms, they did not form the core of trade union leadership in Alberta, nor did they comprise the membership of the skilled crafts from which this leadership emerged.

²⁰Canada, Dominion Bureau of Statistics, Canada Year Book, 1921 (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1922), p. 102.

The ethnic factor is significant when the 1918-1919 period is examined, for the national origins of strike leadership then came under close scrutiny. During the Edmonton sympathetic strike of 1919, it was felt necessary to publish the membership of the executive of the general strike committee in the Edmonton Bulletin on June 11, 1919. Of the eight members of the executive, all but one (a Swede) passed the ethnic litmus test and came from Anglo-Celtic stock.²¹

Trade Union Organization in Alberta to 1916

Alberta trade union organization by 1916 consisted of numerous locals, the majority of which were affiliated to an urban trade union centre such as the Edmonton Trades and Labor Council, as well as the Alberta Federation of Labor, and the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada. Founded in 1886, the T.L.C. originally aspired to include all trade unions in Canada including assemblies of the Knights of Labor.²² The constitution of the T.L.C. stressed that one of its main functions was to influence labor legislation at the federal level of government.²³ Its all-inclusive membership policy was undermined when jurisdictional disputes broke-out between Canadian labor unions and "international"

²¹Edmonton Morning Bulletin, June 11, 1919.

²²Harold A. Logan, The History of Trade-Union Organization in Canada (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1928), pp. 53-54.

²³Ibid., p. 57.

unions operating in Canada, the majority of the latter being chartered by the American Federation of Labor.

The influence of the A.F. of L. in Canada was very evident during the 1902 convention of the Trades and Labor Congress at Berlin, Ontario. On this occasion, the Knights of Labor assemblies were denied representation at the convention, and the T.L.C. subsequently withheld recognition of any national unions where internationals of the same craft existed.²⁴ As a result of the Berlin meeting, the vast majority of T.L.C. affiliates were also affiliates of the American Federation of Labor. Samuel Gompers, President of the A.F. of L., imposed his philosophy of "pure and simple trades unionism" on these "internationals", and hence they tended to stick strictly to economic matters, avoiding social problems and ideological questions. Their conservative philosophy, and their emphasis upon craft organization, led to a dichotomy in the working force whereby the majority were bereft of trade union protection whereas the minority enjoyed such protection, and the economic benefits which accompanied collective bargaining rights. R. H. Coats in 1913 estimated that the total membership of Canadian trade unions amounted to about six per cent of Canada's wage-earning population.²⁵

²⁴Ibid., p. 57.

²⁵R. H. Coats, "The Labour Movement in Canada", Canada and Its Provinces, Vol. IX (Toronto: Publishers' Association of Canada, Ltd., 1914), p. 322.

The Edmonton Trades and Labor Council was modelled upon the U.S. pattern of urban trade union centres, the U.S. centres being chartered by the American Federation of Labor. Hence, on February 7, 1910 the E.T. & L.C. resolved that "this Council affiliate as a body with the A.F. of L., and apply for a charter."²⁶ The charter was necessitated by the fact that locals of international unions were not affiliating with the Edmonton Council due to its lack of A.F. of L. recognition. By March 7, 1910 the charter had arrived and a special organizational meeting was called for March 11 in order that means might be devised to recruit union locals remaining outside the Council.²⁷ At the latter meeting, it was resolved that the A.F. of L. constitution be invoked to pressure union locals in the building trades into reaffiliating with the Edmonton central body.²⁸ This tactic worked, for within the next several months the building trades unions had sought reaffiliation with the trades council, and several other union locals attained affiliation for the first time.

The American Federation of Labor served as a formative influence in the creation of the Alberta Federation of Labor. The annual convention of the Trades and Labor Congress in 1910 recommended "the establishment of provin-

²⁶Edmonton Trades and Labor Council, Minutes, February 7, 1910.

²⁷Ibid., March 7, 1910.

²⁸Ibid., March 11, 1910.

cial federations of labor corresponding in function to the state federations in the United States, and made provision for them in its constitution."²⁹ In 1910 the British Columbia Federation of Labor was chartered by the T.L.C. Alberta followed the example of B.C. and in June, 1912, the Alberta Federation of Labor was formed.³⁰ The question of the Alberta Federation of Labor was broached at an E.T. & L.C. meeting of August 1, 1910 with "...Bro [sic] Adair in particular advocating the creation of Provincial Federations, similar to the state Federations of the A.F. of L., supported by a general per capita tax levied from the Congress."³¹ A subsequent meeting of the E.T. & L.C. resolved "That this Council is in favor of calling a convention..." for the purpose of forming a Provincial Federation of Labor, this resolution being prompted by Wm. Symonds, Vice-President of the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada for Alberta.³²

The Alberta Federation of Labor was necessary because labor is constitutionally a matter within provincial as well as federal jurisdiction. Labor legislation such as the Mechanics Lien Law (1884), Preferential Assignments Act (1907), Workmen's Compensation Act (1908), Early Closing Act (1912), Act for the Protection of Persons Employed in

²⁹ Logan, op.cit., p. 168.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Edmonton Trades and Labor Council, Minutes, August 1, 1910.

³² Ibid., March 6, 1911.

the Construction of Buildings and Excavations (1913), Factory Act (1917), etc. was passed in the N.W.T. and Alberta prior to, and during, the period which we are examining, although no Department of Labor existed in the province at this time.³³ The Alberta Federation was established as a means by which organized labor might influence legislation concerning Alberta wage earners. Represented within the Federation were Trades and Labor Councils, international and national local branch unions and independent federal labor unions.³⁴

The Canadian Federation of Labor originated after the T.L.C. convention of 1902 mainly through the initiative of those Knights of Labor Assemblies purged from the main Canadian union congress. The C.F.L., named the National Trades and Labor Congress of Canada until 1908,³⁵ is significant because some of its off-shoots were progenitors of the Canadian Congress of Labor founded in 1940.³⁶ The Canadian Brotherhood of Stationary Engineers and Firemen, one of the few C.F.L. affiliates in Alberta, had its headquarters in Edmonton. Formed in June, 1919, it had nine branches in Alberta by 1924.³⁷ The C.B.S.E. & F. sought to gain repres-

³³Blue, op. cit., pp. 375-381.

³⁴Ibid., p. 383.

³⁵Charles Lipton, The Trade Union Movement of Canada, 1827-1959 (2nd ed.; Montreal: Canadian Social Publications Ltd., 1968), pp. 145-147.

³⁶Ibid., p. 267.

³⁷Blue, op. cit., p. 382.

entation on the E.T. & L.C. but, at a council meeting of April 5, 1920, it was decided that the Brotherhood would be denied representation because "there was an International Union to which this organization should belong" and if its delegates were seated by the Trades Council it would be "contrary to the Constitution of the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada."³⁸

In Edmonton, the Federated Association of Letter Carriers (Local 15) was another Canadian union existing prior to 1920. In good standing with the T.L.C., it was eligible for affiliation with the E.T. & L.C. Besides being one of the few national unions in Edmonton during this period, it bears mention because it, along with the Amalgamated Postal Workers, rejected participation in the Edmonton sympathetic strike of 1919.³⁹ Another Canadian union, the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway Employees, established a local in Edmonton by 1918.⁴⁰

The predominance of trade union continentalism, or "internationalism", has been amply demonstrated at the local, provincial, and federal levels of trade union organization. Since the "international" unions had at their disposal funds

³⁸Edmonton Trades and Labor Council, Minutes, April 5, 1920.

³⁹Canada, Department of Labour, Seventh Annual Report on Labour Organization in Canada, 1917 (Ottawa: Government Printing Bureau, 1918), pp. 167-171.

⁴⁰Canada, Department of Labour, Eighth Annual Report on Labour Organization in Canada, 1918 (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1919), p. 173.

and organizational capacity that gave them an overwhelming competitive advantage over Canadian trade unionism, it was remarkable that national trade unions were able to expand, let alone survive, in western Canada before and during World War I. The C.B.R.E., the most successful Canadian trade union, made vigorous efforts to penetrate into the West in 1910 and 1912.⁴¹ In 1916, in spite of previous setbacks, the C.B.R.E. resumed its drive to organize in the West,⁴² and from this point onward it was to be a major factor in Western Canadian trade union history. The westward penetration of the C.B.R.E. introduces the question of industrial unionism as well as that of national trade unionism.

Industrial Unionism

During the labor unrest in Western Canada from 1916 to 1921, the question of industrial unionism was inextricably linked with that of Canadian union autonomy. The O.B.U. secessionist movement was an attempt at industrial unionism, yet trade union nationalism was also involved, a fact evidenced by the rhetoric of O.B.U. proponents.⁴³

⁴¹ Greening and Maclean, op. cit., pp. 28-30.

⁴² Ibid., pp. 37-38, 41-43.

⁴³ Calgary Daily Herald, March 12, 1919, p. 6. The Calgary Daily Herald, commenting upon the afternoon session of the annual convention of the British Columbia Federation of Labor on March 11, 1919, stated:

"Affiliation with international unions was assailed from almost every conceivable angle...., and eventually a resolution was almost unanimously adopted recommending this be severed"

Marion Savage defined an industrial union as follows:

... [T]he industrial union differs from other unions in that it includes all who work in an industry, regardless of differences in craft, sex, or race. Whereas the craft union seeks to unite those using the same tools or doing the same kind of work with approximately the same degree of skill, the industrial union seeks to unite all who are engaged upon a certain product or class of products, regardless⁴⁴ of the character of the service which they render.

This definition underscores the fact that industrial unionism represents a qualitatively higher level of trade union organization than craft unionism. Such organization possesses an inherent logic; it is logical that when a trans-continental railway such as the C.P.R. is controlled by one central management, it be confronted by one industrial union, or a limited number of unions working in concert, which may pry maximum economic concessions from that management.

The United Mine Workers of America, formed in 1890 with a charter from the American Federation of Labor,⁴⁵ was one of the first industrial unions which possessed a long-term survival capacity. The U.M.W.A. included within its ranks "all working men in and around the coal mines, whether they be teamsters, firemen, blacksmiths, car dumpers, slate pickers, miners, or men engaged in various other occupations connected with the industry."⁴⁶ The relatively

⁴⁴Marion Savage, Industrial Unionism in America (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1922), p. 3.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 82.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 3.

conservative leadership which predominated within the U.M.W.A. for most of its history indicates that industrial unionism did not necessarily entail ideological underpinnings of an unorthodox nature.

The concept of industrial unionism spread into western Canada from the east and from the south. These two merging currents produced an unique blend of theory pertaining to industrial unionism, a mixture which included European, British, Canadian, and U.S. modes of trade union organization. That U.S. concepts of industrial unionism would enter Canada is an obvious consequence of those North American physiographic realities which promote a north-south flow of trade, investment, population, and ideology. Regionalism played a role in the growth of industrial unionism, and radical trade unionism, in both western Canada and the U.S. At the same time, two countries existed with dissimilar outlooks towards politics, economic organization, and culture.

Canada was linked by transcontinental railway networks which promoted the flow of commodities and populations on an east-west basis. Alberta was populated to a large extent by Canadian and British stock; eastern cultural and political loyalties inevitably influenced trade union development in the province. Industrial unionism in the West may have developed unique characteristics in relationship to its mode of development in eastern Canada but, at the same time, it could not help but differ in structure to that developing

in northwestern United States. Of the various sectors of the economy where industrial unionism could be expected to spread on an east-west basis, it is in the area of railway transport that such a mode of union organization could most logically emerge.

The spread of industrial unionism in some sectors of the economy, especially mining and other industries involving the extraction of primary commodities, produced a history of protracted, and often violent, labor-management confrontations. Crass exploitation of an overworked labor force, often comprising immigrant labor shunned by conservative trade union organizers, not surprisingly would give rise to such unions as the I.W.W.

The Industrial Workers of the World, formed in Chicago in June, 1905, was the product of disparate groupings which shared only one common attribute -- an opposition to capitalism and to craft unionism.⁴⁷ The Western Federation of Miners, founded in 1893⁴⁸ and one of the founding components of the I.W.W., withdrew from the latter union in 1908⁴⁹ and this greatly weakened it structurally. Subsequent defections left the I.W.W. with a poor and unskilled membership base dominated by a leadership professing anarcho-syndicalist beliefs.⁵⁰ The anarcho-syndicalist orientation

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 145.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 120.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 125.

⁵⁰Ibid., pp. 146-147.

of the I.W.W. is clearly reflected in the Preamble to its constitution adopted at its 1908 convention:

It is the historic mission of the working class to do away with capitalism. The army of production must be organized, not only for the every-day struggle with capitalists, but also to carry on production when capitalism shall have been overthrown. By organizing industrially we are forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old. 51

The I.W.W. entered western Canada in 1906, forming several branches among metal miners and unskilled workers.⁵² By 1911, its self-proclaimed membership was about 10,000, most of these residing in B.C. but some working in the coal mines of southwestern Alberta.⁵³ After 1911, the I.W.W. experienced a membership decline and in 1918-1919 it was outlawed by the Canadian Government.⁵⁴ After regaining its legality, it made an ephemeral reappearance in Alberta when some coal miners switched affiliation from the O.B.U. to the

⁵¹ Fred Thompson (compiler), The I.W.W.: Its First Fifty Years (1905-1955) (Chicago: Industrial Workers of the World, 1955), p. 4.

⁵² Logan, op.cit., p. 153.

⁵³ Ibid.

The I.W.W., while not significant in the labor history of Edmonton, did have a local in the city which lasted at least until the latter part of 1914. This local, #82, was formed on August 27, 1912, with G. Larson as its secretary. See Second Annual Report on Labour Organization in Canada (Ottawa: 1912), p. 156. Presumably the I.W.W. attempted to organize miners and general laborers in the Edmonton district. From the Minutes of the E.T. & L.C., August 3, 17, 1914, we know that it worked in concert with the executive of the Trades Council to form a "Rowan and Barret Defense League."

⁵⁴ Ibid., pp. 153-154.

I.W.W. in the early 1920's.⁵⁵

The O.B.U. has been often confused, deliberately or mistakenly, with the I.W.W. The reason for this confusion could be due to the use of the slogan "One Big Union" by the I.W.W. However, the Canadian variant of radical industrial unionism after World War I cannot be dismissed as being merely a carbon copy of the I.W.W. Such an identification leads to simplistic and inaccurate assessments of the 1919 period of labor unrest by writers such as J. G. MacGregor who asserted:

Behind the unrest...stood the old IWW organization which became that sinister progenitor of the OBU, the One Big Union, which, when it was launched in Calgary in March 1919, brought with it fear of a Canada-wide revolution. The celebrated Winnipeg strike of 1919 was but one of its manifestations, while in Edmonton the publication of the "Soviet" and a general strike were others. 56

While the O.B.U. and its activities in the Edmonton area are examined in some detail below, its relationship with the I.W.W. warrants some comment.

As did the I.W.W., the O.B.U. opposed the craft unionism of the American Federation of Labor and the T.L.C. of Canada. However, the U.S.-based union was essentially a vehicle for anarcho-syndicalists after its 1908 convention. The Canadian-based union consisted initially, in 1919, of a conglomerate of radical socialists, anarcho-syndicalists,

⁵⁵Thompson, op. cit., p. 151.

⁵⁶J. G. MacGregor, Edmonton: A History (Edmonton: M. G. Hurtig Publishers, 1967), p. 225.

trade union nationalists, proponents of industrial unionism, naïve social reformers, and opportunists (or, labor statesmen in a hurry). Many of the initiators of the O.B.U. cannot be labeled "radicals" as the subsequent histories of Carl Berg and R. B. Russell demonstrate.⁵⁷ Other founders of the O.B.U. went on to support the Workers' Party of Canada and the Independent Labor Party, two divergent political streams which indicate the futility of attempting to subsume all supporters of the O.B.U. idea under the generic label "radical". About the safest label which can be applied to O.B.U. supporters is "secessionist" as each favored secession from "international" craft unions.

D. C. Masters, citing Industrial Unionism in America by M. D. Savage, indicates two notable differences between the I.W.W. and the O.B.U. The first of these is philosophical; the Preamble to the constitution of the latter organization, rather than envisioning the day when "capitalism shall have been overthrown", stresses the need for education of workers in order that they might be prepared for the day when "production for profit shall be replaced by production for use."⁵⁸ The second is structural;

⁵⁷ While D. C. Masters in The Winnipeg General Strike (p. 70) describes Russell as being an "extremist", his relationship with the Workers' Party of Canada hardly places him on the far-left of the political spectrum. See William Rodney, Soldiers of the International (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968), pp. 37, 48, 51. Of special interest is Russell's use of the label "foreign agitator" (p. 51) to describe a communist with whom he did not agree.

⁵⁸ D. C. Masters, The Winnipeg General Strike (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1950), p. 153.

the I.W.W. possessed a more genuine type of industrial union organization since the O.B.U. grouped its workers on a territorial basis.⁵⁹ After the disintegration of the O.B.U. during the early 1920's, and after its more politically-orientated advocates gravitated to the political groupings of their choice, what remained of the Canadian secessionist union was a small, ineffectual cult modelled upon an impractical theoretical construct and dominated by essentially conservative men. The differences between the O.B.U. and the I.W.W. were accented in 1920 when the O.B.U. made attempts to organize in the United States, hence raising the ire of the U.S.-based union which described its Canadian competitor as being "not red but pale pink" and in league with the "reactionary Socialist party of Canada."⁶⁰

Labor union organization in Edmonton and district prior to World War One was the product of the twin social processes of industrialization and urbanization. The first trade unions in Edmonton were "international" craft unions comprising skilled craftsmen usually, but not entirely, of an Anglo-Celtic background and often exceptionally literate and articulate. Some industrial unions existed, but the first of these to appear, the United Mineworkers of America, was an "international" union with a fairly orthodox leadership. Its membership had a higher component of non-Anglo-

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 23.

⁶⁰Savage, op. cit., p. 195.

Celtic workers, but leadership positions were often assumed by English-speaking miners. Trade union centres such as the E.T. & L.C. and the Alberta Federation of Labor, designed to influence relations between organized labor and the civic and provincial governments, were modelled upon the U.S. pattern and hence indicated the influence the American Federation of Labor had in Canada. World War One and its accompanying economic dislocation was to threaten the domination of "international unions" as "radical" concepts of trade union organization combined with a nationalist sentiment among trade unionists, especially in the West.

Chapter II

EFFECTS OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR ON LABOR

Labor's Attitude Towards World War I

Prior to World War I, organized labor in Canada tended to be critical of steps taken by various governments in the western world which smacked of militarism. For example, in 1910 the T.L.C. convention instructed its executive to contact all national and international labor congresses and federations, asking that an international peace conference be arranged so that organized labor might express the unanimous opposition to international warfare.¹ In 1911, the T.L.C. convention advocated general strike action in all countries planning war, and in 1912 and 1913 T.L.C. conventions further echoed this sentiment.²

When war was declared in August, 1914, T.L.C. officialdom tended to change its position. Canadian affection towards Britain and the Empire was reflected within the ranks of organized labor as in other sectors of society. At the St. John, New Brunswick, convention of the T.L.C. in 1914, fervent support for the war was withheld on one hand and, on the other, no attempt was made to initiate unilateral action by Canadian workers against the conflict.³ Ex-

¹Charles Lipton, The Trade Union Movement of Canada, 1827-1959 (2nd ed.; Montreal: Canadian Social Publications Ltd., 1968), p. 157.

²Ibid., pp. 160-161.

³Ibid., pp. 164-165.

pressions of jingoism there were, but outspoken opposition to the fighting was also expressed.⁴ The jingoism expressed by the American Federation of Labor after the U.S. entry into W.W. I, and that reflected in the utterances of the British Trade Union Congress, was muted when the T.L.C. President Watters made references to the fighting.⁵ This caution was an indication that divergent attitudes existed among trade unionists regarding Canada's war effort. This division of opinion was experienced at the local level, in Edmonton, as well as at the higher levels of trade union organization.

J. R. Knight, delegate for the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners, Local 1325, to the E.T. & L.C., introduced the following motion in August, 1914:

That the sympathies of the Edmonton Trades and Labor Council are entirely with the working class irrespective of nationality who will now (as they have always in the past) bear the burden of misery and privation which will be the inevitable result of the war being waged at the present in Europe. 6

In spite of this resolution expressing solidarity with workers of all nationalities, a resolution which was carried, 461 Edmonton trade unionists had enlisted for active duty in the Canadian forces by the end of 1915, and another thirteen

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Edmonton Trades and Labor Council, Minutes, August 3, 1914.
Typing errors from the E.T. & L.C. Minutes have been corrected.

were reservists.⁷ By the end of 1917, total enlistments had expanded to 913.⁸ Considering that trade union membership represented in the Trades Council was, at the most, 3,000⁹ in 1914, a sizeable percentage of Edmonton workers in 1914-1915 had volunteered for duty overseas. By the end of 1915, the number of trade unionists represented in the Council was 1,500,¹⁰ illustrating the extent to which the war depleted organized labor. J. R. Knight's motion did not represent the feelings of numerous trade union members in Edmonton.

The relationship of organized labor in Edmonton with the Edmonton Executive Committee of the Canadian Patriotic Fund was curious. This fund, among other functions, gave financial assistance to the wives and dependents of Canadian troops overseas. The E.T. & L.C. persisted mightily to gain representation on this Executive Committee. The Minutes of the Council from February, 1915 until the latter part of 1916 contain numerous references to the Fund, and on several occasions representatives from the labor body were co-opted by the Patriotic Fund for its money-raising activities. This preoccupation with the fund-raising organiz-

⁷Canada, Department of Labour, Fifth Annual Report on Labour Organization in Canada, 1915 (Ottawa: Government Printing Bureau, 1916), p. 21.

⁸Canada, Department of Labour, Seventh Annual Report on Labour Organization in Canada, 1917 (Ottawa: Government Printing Bureau, 1918), p. 25.

⁹Fifth Annual Report on Labour Organization in Canada, 1915, p. 203.

¹⁰Ibid.

ation might be construed as being a manifestation of jingoism on the part of Council delegates, yet this was not their only motive. Many trade unionists having volunteered for overseas duty, it is natural that organized labor would wish to ensure that their wives and dependents would be looked-after in Canada. Since many workers donated to the Fund, the Trades Council would naturally wish to serve as a "watchdog" over the Fund and its expenditure of money for relief purposes. Probably all factors mentioned above played a part in ensuring that the Patriotic Fund would engage the attention of the Council so persistently during the first half of the war.

Labor's Rising Militancy

World War I saw trade union membership decline from the 1913 pre-war peak to the nadir attained in 1915 and early 1916.¹¹ After this period, a spectacular increase in membership ensued, this being partly due to the economic dislocation within Canada resulting from the war, and partly because of various decisions made by Prime Minister Borden which antagonized organized labor.

From 1916, rapidly rising prices were a major factor in promoting labor unrest. Appendix #3 indicates the fluctuations of prices after 1913. With 100 being the price index for this base year, we can see that prices rose relatively slowly until the end of 1915. During 1916, there was

¹¹Lipton, op.cit., pp. 168-169.

a dramatic rise of 22 index points, and in 1917 a further rise of 47 points. By 1919, the index was 209, more than double that of 1913, and in 1920 a peak index number of 244 was reached. A glance at the table showing the "percentage which interquartile range is of median" shows the significance of the year 1917 when price increases are being considered. The peak percentage, 44%, indicates that in that year the median price of commodities examined in the calculation of the index experienced a dramatic fluctuation.¹²

In Edmonton, inflation and food prices constantly preoccupied E.T. & L.C. delegates as of 1916. Hence, on July 17, W. H. Peebles of the Hotel and Restaurant Employees' union pointed out that some members of his union were seen eating at the Phoenix Café, a non-union shop. When questioned about their eating practices, the men "...stated that their wages had been cut 60% since the war and therefore they could not afford to meet any higher prices...."¹³ On October 2, it was announced that the Edmonton Public School Board had accepted the recommendation of the Council that a Fair Wage Clause be inserted in all construction contracts with the Board.¹⁴ The Fair Wage Clause technique, applicable to different branches of local administration such as

¹²V. W. Bladen and A. F. W. Plumptre, "An Analysis of Prices and Price Indexes in Canada, 1913-1925", Canadian Historical Review, Vol. VIII, No. 111 (Sept., 1927), pp. 243-246.

¹³Edmonton Trades and Labor Council, Minutes, July 17, 1916.

¹⁴Ibid., October 2, 1916.

school boards, was a means by which satisfactory wage levels might be maintained during the construction of public facilities and the maintenance of public services. On November 6, a discussion of the high cost-of-living ensued within the E.T. & L.C., and similar discussions persisted through 1917. Topics of concern included speculation in food commodities (August 6, 1917), relations with the Consumers' League (August 20), and recommendations of the Committee on Food Conservation (one such recommendation, that meat consumption be eliminated, hardly appealed to delegates at the Council meeting of October 15). On March 11, 1918, the E.T. & L.C. discussed income taxation, opposing a tax on all incomes below \$2,000 while, on April 15, increased street railway fares caused concern.¹⁵

After 1915 until the end of the War, unemployment was not a serious concern of organized labor in Canada. As Appendix #4 indicates, the number of unemployed expressed as a percentage of total trade union membership decreased from 8.7% in 1915 to 2.17% the following year, and until 1919 this percentage never surpassed 3%. The weakness of this indicator of unemployment is obvious as only a minority of the Canadian working force was unionized and accurate unemployment percentages for the entire Canadian work force can only be roughly estimated. This is why, in 1919, unemployment statistics were based upon weekly returns from employ-

¹⁵Compiled from the Edmonton Trades and Labor Council, Minutes, 1917-1918.

ers of labor as opposed to monthly returns from trade union locals which had been the basis of unemployment statistics up to then.¹⁶

The above-mentioned high employment percentage for 1915 reflected the situation in Edmonton quite adequately. Several meetings of the E.T. & L.C. in late 1914 and early 1915 dealt with the "acute distress consequent upon the great amount of unemployment"¹⁷ and on February 15, 1915, a committee appointed by the Council summarized relief measures undertaken by the City for the unemployed.¹⁸ Not unexpectedly, the Trades Council took a dim view of "the importation of Aliens by the management of the Grand Trunk Pacific Hotel Co." when such a situation prevailed.¹⁹ While the unemployment picture brightened in 1916, the E.T. & L.C. found it necessary to appoint a committee to protest at City Hall against the "employment of men from outside the city whilst taxpayers and citizens [were] unemployed."²⁰ Imported men were being used on the Edmonton Street Railway.

Returned soldiers were first mentioned at the April

¹⁶K. B. Conn, "Employment and Unemployment in Canada: Its Measurement with Special Reference to 1919", Canadian Historical Review, Vol. VI, No. 111 (Sept., 1925), pp. 236-244.

¹⁷Cited in the Edmonton Trades and Labor Council, Minutes, November 16, 1914.

¹⁸Edmonton Trades and Labor Council, Minutes, February 15, 1915.

¹⁹Ibid., July 19, 1915.

²⁰Ibid., April 3, 1916.

17 meeting of the Labor Council. Then, a letter "informing the council that returned soldiers were acting as strike breakers against the moving picture operators" of Calgary was discussed. By December, 1916, the problem of the returned soldier appeared more serious when the Provincial Government resolved to retrain partially disabled veterans, leading the E.T. & L.C. to fear that "an army of half trained men" would be created which "would flood the market with cheap labor." The Council's concern was to be transmitted to the Alberta Federation of Labor and the Dominion T.L.C.²¹

In June, 1917, the Edmonton Council resolved that a seven-man committee "be appointed to meet a Committee of the Great War Veterans Association to discuss with them questions of vital interest to both Associations."²² This joint meeting was held on July 24, and it issued a declaration stating that "the economic interests of the returned soldiers are bound in the future welfare of the working class of Canada."²³ Later, an E.T. & L.C. committee recommended that committees from the Council and the G.W.V.A. of Edmonton meet to discuss "ways and means of furthering the mutual and social betterment of the two organizations."²⁴ On September 16, 1918, the G.W.V.A. was invited to send a

²¹Ibid., March 19, 1917.

²²Ibid., June 18, 1917.

²³Ibid., August, 1917.

²⁴Ibid., March 18, 1918.

fraternal delegate to the Trades Council.²⁵ However, as of January 20, 1919, the Council had received no reply to this invitation.²⁶

Total severance of relations between the Trades Council and the G.W.V.A. did not result, for at the November 17, 1919 meeting of the Council it was announced that Edmonton labor was invited to send a fraternal delegate to the annual convention of the G.W.V.A., Alberta Command, and consequently President R. McCreath was elected delegate to the convention.²⁷ The contacts established between the E.T. & L.C. and the G.W.V.A. probably mitigated friction between returning soldiers and organized labor, this being of importance in 1919 when labor would need as many friends as possible as the process of labor unrest initiated during the war reached a climax.

Edmonton Labor and the Three Levels of Government

In December, 1916, the T.L.C. was informed by Prime Minister Borden and R. B. Bennett, Director-General for Manpower, that the government was planning registration of the country's work force. Later, Borden informed the Congress that registration was not necessarily a harbinger of conscription, but that conscription could not be ruled out if conditions warranted it. The T.L.C. leadership in January,

²⁵Ibid., September 16, 1918.

²⁶Ibid., January 20, 1919.

²⁷Ibid., November 17, 1919.

1917, recommended that Congress affiliates comply with the Government's registration demands.²⁸ On January 3, 1917, this recommendation was discussed by the E.T. & L.C. and J. R. Knight moved that the Council oppose the signing of the registration cards sent out by the Government, and that it recommend to the body's "affiliated membership that they be not signed."²⁹ J. Findlay, Vice-President of the Council, and R. McCreath, Trustee, headed-off this overt opposition to registration by successfully moving an amendment to the effect that "the question of signing the cards, dealing with National Service, be left to the descretion [sic] of the individual members of the Local Unions."³⁰

In June, 1917, the Conscription Bill was introduced in the House of Commons. The E.T. & L.C., at its June 4 meeting, tackled the conscription question in the same equivocating manner that it had tackled registration. In response to a motion that "the council go on record as [being] against Conscription," a successful amendment countered the Council "go on record as [being] against any form of conscription that does not include the conscription of all wealth and natural resources..."³¹ On July 16, in response to a Calgary Trades Council request that the Edmonton Coun-

²⁸Lipton, op. cit., p. 169.

²⁹Edmonton Trades and Labor Council, Minutes, January 3, 1917.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Ibid., June 4, 1917.

cil oppose conscription, the E.T. & L.C. resolved that, in its opinion, "the Dominion Trades Congress is the only competent body to deal with this question."³² The T.L.C., at its September convention, chose not to advocate overt opposition to conscription as it was, by then, the law of the land.³³

The attitude of the E.T. & L.C. regarding conscription confirms the relatively conservative nature of this body, and especially its leadership. This attitude of caution and conservatism persisted into the 1918-1919 period, for at that time Edmonton proved to be one of the less militant centres during a phase of labor history which involved intense labor-management confrontations. Most important trades councils in B.C. and Alberta opposed conscription, the Vancouver Council going as far as advocating "the conscription of wealth before the conscription of manpower," with Lethbridge being more explicit about how wealth might be "conscripted" (going as far as recommending the nationalization of a host of Canadian industries). The Calgary council considered at length means of preventing the enforcement of conscription. Not surprisingly, the Winnipeg council voiced strong opposition and went as far as calling a general strike vote over the issue, a vote which favored general strike action by a massive majority providing "sim-

³²Ibid., July 16, 1917.

³³Lipton, op. cit., p. 176.

ilar action was adopted in all other cities."³⁴

The cautious attitude regarding overt opposition to Conscription reflected by the E.T. & L.C. was transmitted to the annual convention of the T.L.C. by A. Farmilo. Besides being Secretary of the Edmonton Council, Farmilo was Secretary of the local branch of the Journeymen Stonecutters' Association.³⁵ As a skilled artisan, Farmilo enjoyed a pride in his craft and an intense loyalty to his international craft association. This allegiance to his international union would place him in a conservative position as far as the questions of conscription, industrial unionism, Canadian union autonomy, and general strike action are concerned. Yet, Farmilo came from an English trade union background,³⁶ and he received a fairly extensive education in the theory of the labor movement while in England. Some of his early studies involved a rather traditional Marxist interpretation of the working class, its origins, and its current relationship to capital. Hence he, in common with some of his associates among the leadership of the E.T. & L.C., cannot be labelled a "conservative" in the strict sense. As he remained staunchly loyal to his international craft union, the term "loyalist" might be accurately applied

³⁴Seventh Annual Report on Labour Organization in Canada, 1917, pp. 31-32.

³⁵Edmonton Journal, September 24, 1955. Some of his earlier research notes, as far as working class history is concerned, may be found among the Farmilo Papers at the Provincial Archives, Edmonton.

³⁶Ibid.

to this rather paradoxical individual. His subsequent role in the western Canadian labor scene can be best explained in terms of his craft loyalty which, to him, was concomitant to a loyalty to international craft unionism.

At the September, 1917, convention of the T.L.C., Farmilo attempted to amend the report of the Executive Council on conscription so that it would reflect the rather middle-of-the-road position assumed by the E.T. & L.C. Still, Farmilo's amendment was stronger in criticism of the government's conscription act than the stance finally assumed by the T.L.C. since the Edmontonian would have denied support to the principle of conscripting men for war purposes until the principle of the conscription of wealth had first been accepted by the Borden regime.³⁷

The conscription controversy was but one indicator that relations between organized labor and the Borden government were not the best. Yet, for political purposes, Borden had attempted to appease labor by appointing, in 1917, Gideon Robertson of the Order of Railroad Telegraphers to the Senate³⁸ and shortly thereafter to the post of Minister of Labor.³⁹ Robertson, being a staunch supporter of conscription, was hardly representative of those trade unionists

³⁷Seventh Annual Report on Labour Organization in Canada, 1917, p. 30.

³⁸Martin Robin, Radical Politics and Canadian Labour: 1880-1930 (Kingston: Industrial Relations Centre, Queen's University, 1968), pp. 129, 138.

³⁹Ibid., p. 137.

who had, at the T.L.C. convention in 1917, almost unanimously opposed conscription in principle.⁴⁰ He did, however, have the backing of Samuel Gompers who was able to say, at a joint meeting of both Houses of Parliament, that the War represented "...the most wonderful crusade ever entered upon in the whole history of the world."⁴¹ This Unionist-Gompers-Robertson honeymoon was not that greatly appreciated by the E.T. & L.C., the minutes of which stated for June 18, 1918:

A resolution was introduced protesting against the statements of the Premier Borden [sic] re strikers being Idlers, and that the recent dominion Law [sic] should apply to them.

It was regulary [sic] moved and seconded that the resolution be forwarded to Ottawa. carried. 42

The "recent law" referred to was an "anti-loafing" law enacted by order-in-council in April, 1918, by the Unionists and which was considered as a means of ending Winnipeg strike action.⁴³

Relations of the E.T. & L.C. with the Provincial Government and City of Edmonton were more harmonious. Locally, the Council had participated actively in civic

⁴⁰Seventh Annual Report on Labour Organization in Canada, 1917, p. 30.

This expression of opposition was not binding on the T.L.C. executive. It was only an indicator of the "feelings" of the convention toward the scheme, and in no way committed organized labor to overt opposition.

⁴¹Robin, op. cit., p. 139, citing Industrial Banner, June 28, 1918.

⁴²Edmonton Trades and Labor Council, Minutes, June 18, 1918.

⁴³Edmonton Bulletin, May 31, 1918.

politics during World War I and had fairly good liaison with City Hall. Consistently, the Trades Council fielded labor candidates for aldermanic and school board offices. While most candidates were defeated, J. A. Kinney (a member of the same local of the carpenters' union as the socialist, J. R. Knight) was re-elected throughout the War during each of the annual aldermanic contests. The stormy year of 1919 saw organized labor achieve some of its greatest successes in municipal politics. On October 15 -- after the Edmonton sympathetic strike -- a joint meeting of the Dominion Labor Party and the E.T. & L.C. transpired at which J. A. Clarke was endorsed as mayoralty candidate, and three trade unionists as aldermanic candidates. An additional trade unionist was endorsed as South Side aldermanic candidate, and another was supported for the school board contest.⁴⁴ The E.T. & L.C. Minutes reveal that during the December election three labor representatives won election as aldermen (Kinney, East, and Sheppard) as well as Joe Clarke winning re-election as mayor.⁴⁵

Joseph Clarke, Edmonton lawyer and alderman from

⁴⁴Edmonton Trades and Labor Council, Minutes, October 20, 1919. The Edmonton-Strathcona Amalgamation Act of 1912 provided that the three South Siders in any aldermanic contest receiving the highest number of votes on the South Side would be declared elected. This was intended to ensure South Side representation at City Hall. See J. MacGregor, Edmonton -- A History, p. 189.

⁴⁵Ibid., January 5, 1920. Sheppard was not listed as an E.T. & L.C. candidate in the Minutes prior to the election.

1912 until 1915, maintained good rapport with the E.T. & L.C. Described as being "a Liberal with radical views,"⁴⁶ he was Mayor in 1919 and 1920. In 1919, he made considerable efforts to elicit rapport with the E.T. & L.C., and the Council communicated to him and the City Council its feelings regarding the implementation of a Fair Wage Clause for civic construction and service activities, property taxation and assessments for the improvement of property, increases in street car fares, use of non-union labor in civic projects, etc.⁴⁷ The E.T. & L.C. was also extended representation on various civic boards (e.g., Exhibition Board, Hospital Board, and Library Board).⁴⁸ That Clarke was thoroughly acceptable to organized labor was indicated by the fact that he received the mayoralty endorsement of the Trades Council for the December, 1919, election after the massive labor unrest of that year had abated. While maligned by the daily press and many aldermen, Clarke had resisted pressures from various sectors of the community to use drastic measures to terminate the Edmonton strike action.⁴⁹

The relationship between Edmonton organized labor and the Provincial Government was relatively cordial. Since

⁴⁶ John Blue, Alberta Past and Present, Vol. 11, Historical and Biographical (Chicago: Pioneer Historical Publishing Co., 1924), pp. 135-136.

⁴⁷ Compiled from the Edmonton Trades and Labor Council, Minutes, 1919.

⁴⁸ Edmonton Trades and Labor Council, Minutes, December 15, 1919.

⁴⁹ Edmonton Morning Bulletin, May 26, 1919, p. 1.

Edmonton was the capital of the Province, the E.T. & L.C. had fairly direct access to the corridors of power in Alberta. In addition, the Alberta Federation of Labor, established to lobby for provincial legislation favorable to labor, was strongly influenced by the opinions expressed within the Edmonton Council. The Annual Reports of Labour Organization in Canada for the years 1914-1920 contain numerous examples of men prominent in both Edmonton labor and the Alberta Federation of Labor. In addition, as indicated by the Minutes of the E.T. & L.C., the Edmonton labor body elected annually a Vice-President for the A.F.L.

Prior to, and during, the W.W. I period, considerable labor legislation was passed favorable to organized labor in Alberta. While this legislation did not always meet the expectations of the labor movement, the Liberal government usually elicited the views of trade union organizations before laws affecting labor were enacted. Hon. C. W. Cross was instrumental in securing the passage of the Compensation Act of Alberta in 1908. Cross, Attorney-General from 1905 until 1910 and from 1912 until 1918,⁵⁰ was quite sympathetic towards workingmen when it came to safety regulations, hours of work, etc. When the compensation legislation was being drafted, he allowed several changes in the proposed statute as a result of pressures from trades

⁵⁰ John Blue, Alberta Past and Present, Vol. 1, pp. 121 ff.

councils in the Province.⁵¹ He also evinced his concern for workers through his support for an eight-hour law in coal mines, and a rigid enforcement of the Sabbath Observance Act (this Act earning Cross and the Rutherford Government the enmity of the C.P.R.).⁵² Cross, like organized labor, was cool to the idea of prohibition.⁵³ Later, as a Laurier loyalist during the conscription crisis and the subsequent formation of the Unionist government, he adopted stances with which many trade unionists could identify.⁵⁴

Charles Stewart, when he became Premier in 1917, was cognizant of the political power of the farmer in Alberta politics and consequently geared his policies to accord to the wishes of the agrarian sector of the population.⁵⁵ The U.F.A. had not actively opposed most Liberal candidates during the 1917 Alberta election, but early in 1919 had opted for independent political action in Alberta.⁵⁶ William Irvine of Calgary became editor of the Alberta Non-Partisan in 1917 and the Western Independent in 1919. These papers reflected the attitudes of the organized farmer, and at the same time advocated the idea of labor-farmer co-op-

⁵¹L. G. Thomas, The Liberal Party in Alberta (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1959), pp. 56-57.

⁵²Ibid., p. 68.

⁵³Ibid., p. 139.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 181 ff.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 177.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 199.

eration in Alberta politics.⁵⁷ Therefore, in spite of the essentially suspicious attitudes of many farmers towards trade unionism, important opinion-molders within the Non-Partisan League and the United Farmers of Alberta were propagating the idea of labor-farmer co-operation. During a period of political uncertainty, when the U.F.A. was on the political ascendant and the Alberta Liberal regime on the verge of dissolution and defeat, it would be expected that the Provincial Government would be temporizing when confronted by the labor unrest of the 1918-1919 period.

Labor Unrest During World War I

During the 1916-1917 period, a shift in labor's attitude towards working and living conditions could be detected. One indicator of this was the number of workers involved in strikes throughout Canada. While the number of striking unionists had decreased during the 1914-1915 period, in 1916 there were 26,538 workingmen involved in strikes, this being roughly equal to the average for the 1900-1913 period. In 1917, the pre-War high of 42,860 persons involved in strikes (1912) was surpassed, the total for this year being 50,255. In 1916, striking coal miners at Drumheller added significantly to Alberta's share of the statistics.⁵⁸

In Edmonton, labor unrest and strike action centred

⁵⁷L. G. Stolee, "The Parliamentary Career of William Irvine, 1922-1935" (unpublished Master of Arts thesis, University of Alberta, 1969), p. 7.

⁵⁸Lipton, op. cit., pp. 168-169.

mainly around the attempts of the streetrailwaymen to gain recognition for their union, Local 569 of the Amalgamated Association of the Street and Electric Railway Employees of America. The Edmonton Street Railway was commenced in 1908 and by 1911 the E.T. & L.C. was attempting to organize street railway employees.⁵⁹ Organizational attempts proved difficult, and once a union local was organized, getting civic recognition was more difficult yet. The Minutes of the E.T. & L.C. for the 1915-1917 period include numerous references to the streetrailwaymen confronting the civic administration. A serious dispute occurred in September, 1917, when the streetrailwaymen struck for higher wages and were temporarily replaced by returning soldiers. The strikers subsequently criticized the Trades Council for its apparent lack of support during this acrimonious conflict.⁶⁰

During 1918, Edmonton workers were confronted by the possibility of a general strike on all transcontinental railway networks, this possibility arising due to the spectacular growth of the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway Employees. The C.B.R.E. had attained a membership of 7,000 during 1916, an increase of 1,235 since 1915.⁶¹ By the end of

⁵⁹Edmonton Trades and Labor Council, Minutes, March 11, 1911.

⁶⁰Ibid., September 17, 1917.

⁶¹Canada, Department of Labour, Sixth Annual Report on Labour Organization in Canada, 1916 (Ottawa: Government Printing Bureau, 1917), p. 14.

1917, the membership total reached 8,750.⁶²

The 1916 organizational campaign of the C.B.R.E. focussed upon employees of railway express companies, and in Edmonton this involved workers for the Canadian Northern Express Company and the Canadian Express Company (which handled the express business of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway).⁶³ The branch established in Edmonton for the organization of express workers was Local 31,⁶⁴ and during the course of organizing this local several workers were fired (one of these being Albert Scholey of the Canadian Express Company).⁶⁵ On October 15, 1917, Local 31 of the C.B.R.E. contacted the E.T. & L.C., inquiring about joining the Council.⁶⁶ On February 4, 1918, delegates from the railway union local were admitted to the labor body.⁶⁷ At this meeting, Elroy Robson of Halifax was given a place of honor, Robson being a national organizer for the C.B.R.E.⁶⁸

⁶²Canada, Department of Labour, Seventh Annual Report on Labour Organization in Canada, 1917 (Ottawa: Government Printing Bureau, 1918), p. 189.

⁶³W. E. Greening and M. M. Maclean, It Was Never Easy, 1908-1958: A History of the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway, Transport and General Workers (Ottawa: Mutual Press Ltd., 1961), pp. 41-43.

⁶⁴Sixth Annual Report on Labour Organization in Canada, 1916, p. 219.

⁶⁵Greening and Maclean, op. cit., p. 45.

⁶⁶Edmonton Trades and Labor Council, Minutes, October 15, 1917.

⁶⁷Ibid., February 4, 1918.

⁶⁸Greening and Maclean, op. cit., p. 37.

While the Canadian Northern Express Company had reached a settlement with the C.B.R.E. in 1917, it was not until the spring of 1918 that a settlement was reached between the union and the Canadian Express Company.⁶⁹ During 1917, the C.B.R.E. made a concerted drive to organize various classes of non-operating employees on the Canadian Northern R.R. such as clerks, baggage and freight handlers, dining and café car employees, etc. As of March, 1918 the situation on the C.N.R. was considered so serious that the unionists resolved on strike action if necessary.⁷⁰ Later, a Board of Conciliation was established by the federal government and by the end of July, N. Dixon, General Chairman of the C.B.R.E. negotiating committee, reached a tentative agreement on most matters in dispute with respect to the Western Lines' operations of the C.N.R.⁷¹ The settlement reached by Dixon was unpopular with the C.B.R.E. rank and file concerned, and consequently Dixon was replaced by Robert Dykes of Saskatoon as General Chairman.⁷² Under Dykes, the initial settlement was appealed, and by December, 1918, the changes in the initial settlement demanded by the Union were granted.⁷³ Shortly thereafter, the C.N.R. neg-

⁶⁹Ibid., p. 61.

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 54.

⁷¹Ibid., pp. 54-55.

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³Ibid., pp. 56-57.

otiated a satisfactory agreement with the Brotherhood's General Committee for the whole railway system. In 1919, the C.B.R.E. concluded an agreement with the Grand Trunk Pacific so that the union represented all formerly unorganized employees on all railway lines in Western Canada excepting the Canadian Pacific.⁷⁴ Since, by 1921, the Canadian National Railway system was consolidated, the C.B.R.E. emerged as the largest single labor organization within this system, its membership surpassing 13,000.⁷⁵

The E.T. & L.C., at its meeting of September 16, 1918, supported the efforts of the C.B.R.E. to reach a settlement with the C.N.R. management, and that union's willingness to go on strike if necessary to gain a satisfactory agreement. The Dixon settlement had been repudiated by the majority of C.B.R.E. members by August, 1918, and the Edmonton Trades Council supported the decision of the Edmonton C.B.R.E. members to repudiate the Dixon agreement.⁷⁶ Later, on February 7, 1919, the Council supported the C.B.R.E. in its efforts to combat the Brotherhood of Dominion Express Employees, a company union established by the Dominion Express Company to thwart C.B.R.E. organization of express workers on the C.P.R.⁷⁷

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 61.

⁷⁶Edmonton Trades and Labor Council, Minutes, September 16, 1918.

⁷⁷Ibid., February 7, 1919.

The activities of the C.B.R.E. during 1918 coincided with the efforts of other railway unions to secure employer recognition and favorable wage scales. This cumulative activity on all Canadian railways of any importance nearly triggered a complete walkout from the railways. This railway dispute could well have triggered general strikes in most major western cities, strikes in which trades completely unconnected with the railways would have been involved. A. R. Mosher, President of the C.B.R.E., issued a strike order for all employees of all railway and express companies organized by his union in order to force the recognition of the C.B.R.E. as bargaining agent for Dominion Express employees, and to force a settlement of all other outstanding grievances with the railway companies. Mosher, at the same time, invited all other railway labor organizations facing difficulties similar to those confronting the C.B.R.E. to join the railway walk-out. However, the strike, scheduled for October 14, 1918 was called off because three days before the anticipated action the Dominion Government passed an Order-in-Council banning strikes and lockouts for the duration of the war.⁷⁸ What is of significance as far as Edmonton is concerned is that the E.T. & L.C. had committed itself to supporting the C.B.R.E., and the railway strike would have produced far-ranging repercussions in the City.

At this time, Edmonton and other centres on the

⁷⁸Greening and Maclean, op. cit., pp. 48-49.

C.N.R. and G.T.P. lines were not the only locations experiencing unrest on the railways. During 1917, the International Brotherhood of Railway & Steamship Clerks, Freight Handlers, Express and Station Employees (from this point referred to as the B.R.C.) commenced an organizing drive. The union, an affiliate of the American Federation of Labor, was able to make significant organizational gains in western Canada on the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1918 in spite of the fact that the C.B.R.E. had previously exerted strenuous efforts to organize the category of workers in question.⁷⁹

Calgary was the storm-center in the dispute between freight-handlers, organized by the B.R.C., and the C.P.R. There, freight-handlers struck when a foreman was appointed in spite of the fact that, in the view of the unionists, prior consideration should have been given to twelve men possessing more seniority. In addition, the men claimed that pay increases, based upon the McAdoo Award, were unjustifiably delayed for three months. From Fort William to Vancouver on the C.P.R., freight-handlers affiliated to the B.R.C. struck in sympathy.⁸⁰ By October 25, a tentative settlement was made between the C.P.R. and the union.⁸¹

The Calgary dispute, as well as that of the Edmonton

⁷⁹Ibid., pp. 69-70.

⁸⁰Western Labor News, October 11, 1918.

⁸¹Western Labor News, October 25, 1918.

and district B.R.C. members (Edmonton was, after all, linked to Calgary by a C.P.R.-owned line), was discussed at the October 7, 1918 meeting of the E.T. & L.C. and the following resolution passed:

... [T]hat the Trades Council endorse the Local Freight handlers in their demand for the recognition of the Union and back pay as per McAdoo award and that we petition the Government to establish an arbitration board. 82

At the October 7 meeting, a telegram was received from the Winnipeg T. & L.C. stating that it had decided to take a strike vote and were desirous of knowing the position of the Edmonton Council regarding strike action.⁸³ While the Winnipeg T. & L.C. came very close to initiating a general strike in that city, and the Calgary T. & L.C. had ordered a general strike vote to be taken, the Edmonton Council apparently made no similar move regarding general strike action.⁸⁴ At its October 7th meeting, more time was devoted to discussion of an upcoming Thanksgiving Concert for October 14, 1918 than to discussion of sympathetic

⁸²Edmonton Trades and Labor Council, Minutes, October 7, 1918.

⁸³Ibid.

⁸⁴Western Labor News, October 11 and 25, 1918. Martin Robin in Radical Politics and Canadian Labor, p. 168, stated with regard to the Calgary freight-handlers dispute that the "...Edmonton central council supported the Calgary Council and ordered a general strike vote." He cited as a reference, Masters, op. cit., pp. 16-17 who secured his information from the Western Labor News, Oct. 11, 1918. There is no evidence submitted in Masters, op. cit., the Western Labor News, or the Minutes, E.T. & L.C. to suggest that a general strike vote was called. Robin obviously misread Masters.

action vis-à-vis the striking freight handlers; perhaps the membership had become slightly jaded by general strike agitation.⁸⁵ They had already been bombarded by telegrams from various labor council regarding striking mail carriers and mail clerks in Western Canada, these telegrams informing the E.T. & L.C. that general strike votes were being taken in different cities.⁸⁶ The executive had recommended endorsement "of the attitude of the striking mail carriers and mail clerks", but did not at this time mention a possible general strike in Edmonton.⁸⁷

Edmonton organized labor experienced many of those problems confronted by trade unionists in other Canadian cities: inflation; wartime governmental restrictions on union and political activity; depletion of union ranks due to voluntary enlistment and, later, conscription and relationships among trade unionists and returning soldiers. However, the small size of the organized labor force in Edmonton and its domination by men loyal to international craft unions tended to make Edmonton trade unionism essentially more conservative than trade unionism in other western Canadian cities. Hence, the response of Edmonton labor to many of those economic dislocations engendering increased labor radicalism in other parts of the West tended to be

⁸⁵Edmonton Trades and Labor Council, Minutes, October 7, 1918.

⁸⁶Ibid., August 5, 1918.

⁸⁷Ibid.

less militant, although the forces of protest were not altogether absent from the ranks of Edmonton organized labor. As those forces proposing general strike activity in other parts of Canada attracted increasing attention to their demands, Edmonton labor, because of its craft composition and leadership, tended only reluctantly to support and drastic actions of political or economic nature. Yet, as Edmonton was not an isolated centre within the Western Canadian context, it could not escape those influences impinging upon it from other parts of Alberta and the West.

Chapter III

DEVELOPMENT OF GENERAL STRIKE SENTIMENT IN EDMONTON AND DISTRICT

Radical Politics and Edmonton Labor

Radical approaches to union organization were imported into the Canadian West prior to and during World War I. The vehicles for these ideas were trade unionist (the Western Federation of Miners, the I.W.W., etc.) and political (the Socialist Party of Canada, the Social Democratic Party, etc.). The ideas disseminated were not necessarily syndicalist, but they all attacked the current craft forms of union organization and stressed the need for working-class organization -- political, industrial trade unionism, or both -- in order to attain victory for the working class in Canada. One such vehicle was the Socialist Party of Canada.

The Socialist Party of Canada was formed in 1904 during the convention of the Socialist Party of British Columbia for that year.¹ In Alberta, the December, 1907 convention of the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada endorsed the platform of the Socialist Party of Canada and at this point the Socialist Party of Alberta came into being.² The Party was active in Edmonton during the second

¹Martin Robin, Radical Politics and Canadian Labour: 1880-1930 (Kingston: Industrial Relations Centre, Queen's University, 1968), p. 43.

²Ibid., p. 89.

decade of the twentieth century.³

A member of the Socialist Party of Canada in Edmonton, J. R. Knight, was prominent in the E.T. & L.C. during World War I. It was he who had introduced the motion at the August 3, 1914, meeting of the Council expressing that body's sympathy towards the working class, irrespective of nationality, which would have to bear the greatest privations as a result of the war breaking-out in Europe. Knight, President of the Carpenters and Joiners union local in 1916 and 1917, was assisted actively in his political activities by his wife.

The Federal Labor Union, Local #49, experienced considerable difficulties in attaining affiliation with the E.T. & L.C. (due to the possibility of a jurisdictional conflict with another laborer's union local). When this labor union local was finally admitted on August 19, 1918, one of its accredited delegates was "Mrs. S. I. Johnson Knight."⁵ Appearing with "Mrs. Johnson Knight" was Carl Berg and John

³Compiled from the Edmonton Trades and Labor Council, Minutes, from January 3, 1910 to March 21, 1911.

⁴Edmonton Trades and Labor Council, Minutes, August 3, 1914.

⁵Ibid., August 19, 1918.
This was probably Mrs. Knight, the wife of Joseph Knight. Mrs. Knight was referred to in various ways, but often she was labelled "Mrs. S. J. Knight." As some socialist women of the era used hyphenated names to indicate male-female equality, Mrs. Knight was often referred to as Mrs. Johnson-Knight.

Maguire.⁶ Carl Berg was later to emerge as the Secretary of the One Big Union in Edmonton.⁷ John Maguire, while probably a member of the S.P.C. in August, 1918, definitely was in 1919. On February 7, 1919, the broadsheet The Soviet appeared in Edmonton, published by the Edmonton S.P.C. Its March 8, 1919, edition revealed that its Business Manager was John Maguire,⁸ whose post office box (Box 785) was the same as J. R. Knight's.⁹ Three major figures in the 1919 period of labor unrest in Edmonton hence emerged at the August 19 meeting of the E.T. & L.C., and all as delegates for the Federal Labor Union #49.

As events in Edmonton were reaching the climax manifested in 1919, the Knights were not resting idly as the situation unfolded. Perhaps the pace engaged in by Mrs. Knight was hard on her health, for late in September, 1918 she was proceeding to Rochester, Minn., for hospital treatment. On her journey, she was arrested in Winnipeg after addressing Winnipeg socialists "...for using, not treasonable or seditious, but 'objectionable language.'"¹⁰ Mr. Knight, however, was in fine fettle, for at the December 16,

⁶Ibid.

⁷The Searchlight, June 23, 1920.

⁸The Soviet, March 8, 1919.

⁹Canada, Department of Labour, Seventh Annual Report on Labour Organization in Canada, 1917 (Ottawa: Government Printing Bureau, 1918), p. 168.

¹⁰Western Labor News, October 4, 1918.

1918 meeting of the Edmonton Trades Council he, and Carl Berg, were elected the Council's delegates to the annual convention of the Alberta Federation of Labor at Medicine Hat, this convention being slated for January 6, 1919.¹¹

The January, 1919 convention of the Alberta Federation of Labor at Medicine Hat was a militant gathering. Commencing on January 6, and ending on January 11, there were 105 delegates present.¹² Resolution 18 stressed the importance of amalgamating craft unions into "...one organization ...which will operate industrially and politically towards freedom [and] industrial democracy...."¹³ Resolution 20 indicated that the convention delegates were "...unanimously in accord with the aspirations and methods adopted by the Russian people to gain control of their own destiny."¹⁴ Resolution 23 demanded the release of political prisoners in Canada while Resolution 27 advocated that the western nations adopt a "hands-off" policy in relationship to Russia and Germany. The latter resolution affirmed that the Alberta Federation placed itself "...on record as being in full accord with the aims and purposes of the Russian and German revolutions...."¹⁵ Resolution 28 endorsed the prin-

¹¹Edmonton Trades and Labor Council, Minutes, December 16, 1918.

¹²The Soviet, March 27, 1919.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid.

ciples of "Industrial Unionism" and instructed the Alberta Federation executive to put into operation a system of educational propaganda that would "facilitate the early adoption of this principle by all Trade Unionists within its jurisdiction."¹⁶ It was further decided that the above resolutions, all adopted by the convention, would be re-introduced at the Western Labor Conference for its endorsement and support.¹⁷ It was no coincidence that many of these resolutions were similar to those passed at the annual convention of the B.C. Federation of Labor on March 10-12, 1919, at Calgary.¹⁸ Joe Knight had been in brisk correspondence with his Socialist comrades at Winnipeg and Vancouver for the period heading up to the Western Labor Conference.¹⁹

In spite of the rhetoric prevailing at the Alberta Federation convention, and in spite of the fact that radical resolutions were passed (doubtlessly due, in part, to a crowded agenda), key executive offices of the A.F. of L. were won by "moderates" or "loyalists" vis-à-vis the "international" craft unions. Frank Wheatly, the nominee of District 18 of the U.M.W.A. for president, was elected by large majority over Joe Knight and D. Knott of the Edmonton

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸D. C. Masters, The Winnipeg General Strike (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1950), p. 32.

¹⁹Edmonton Bulletin, January 10, 1919.

Typographical union.²⁰ Wheatly was considered a compromise candidate between the "left", as represented by Knight, and the "right", as represented by Knott.²¹ Walter Smitten was re-elected secretary over Joe Knight by a vote of 62 to 28.²² The formation of a labor party which would be "outside the federation" was decided upon by the delegates in the face of arguments by the socialists that their party "was the true labor party and should not be suspended."²³ One of the chief arguments favoring the formation of a new labor party was "...that such a party would soon effect a political union with the farmers, a union which could never be accomplished by the Socialist party."²⁴

The new labor party, soon to emerge as the Alberta section of the Dominion Labor Party elected, on January 10, Sergt. Jowett of the Lethbridge G.W.V.A. as provisional chairman. The provisional executive included D. McNabb (Lethbridge) and D. K. Knott (Edmonton) as vice-presidents and E. E. Roper (Edmonton) as secretary. The aims of the new party were broadly defined as "being to secure for the producer the full product of his labor of hand and brain."²⁵

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Edmonton Bulletin, January 11, 1919.

The Edmonton local of the S.P.C. was soon engaged in polemics against these "tepid reformists." Joe Knight, in the S.P.C. broadsheet "The Soviet", described the laborites as comprising a "Galaxy of Stars."

The Alberta section of the Dominion Labor Party is to be congratulated upon the calibre of the men who dignify its membership roll....Their change of allegiance must be a tremendous loss to the old parties...

.....

Alex Ross, liberal M.L.A., Alfred Farmilo, Joseph Adair, Ald. James A. Kinney, Mayor Joseph A. Clarke are names to conjur with, and too, it is confidently expected by the faithful, that ex-Attorney-General Cross will eventually add his name to the list. 26

At the January 20, 1919, meeting of the E.T. & L.C., Joe Knight, in conjunction with delegate Berg, "gave a lengthy report of the preceedings" of the A.F. of L. convention. It was moved that the report be received and the delegates thanked.²⁷ From the Council minutes we can conclude that the report of the convention was merely acknowledged as being given; the E.T. & L.C. neither condemned nor approved the resolutions passed at Medicine Hat. But, in the words of Knight:

The report handed in by the delegates of the Trades and Labor Council...contained all these motions

²⁶The Soviet, March 8, 1919.

Alex Ross by this time considered himself as Labor M.P.P. for Calgary. See Edmonton Free Press, April 12, 1919, pp. 1-2. Knight was obviously attempting to give the Dominion Labor Party a liberal aura.

²⁷Edmonton Trades and Labor Council, Minutes, January 20, 1919.

[passed at Medicine Hat] and was adopted by that body without comment. 28

Knight construed the action of the E.T. & L.C. delegates as being a passive concurrence with the A.F. of L. resolutions. Less than a month later, the Council elected a delegate to the Western Labor Conference.²⁹ Vying for the position of official delegate was the redoubtable Mrs. Knight and Council secretary, A. Farmilo. It was Farmilo who won the contest and he certainly had no intention of pressing for some of the radical measures adopted at Medicine Hat when he reached the Calgary meeting.

The Western Labor Conference

The Western Labor Conference arose out of a meeting of a caucus of western delegates to the annual convention of the Trades and Labor Congress in September, 1918 at Quebec. The westerners, dissatisfied with many of the policies adhered to by the executive of the T.L.C., formed a committee to organize the western conference, the president of this committee being Dave Rees of the U.M.W.A.³⁰ Rees, in an interview with the Calgary Daily Herald on March 12, stressed that the conference was established without any intention "...of establishing or of encouraging any dual or

²⁸The Soviet, March 8, 1919.
My emphasis [W.A.].

²⁹Edmonton Trades and Labor Council, Minutes, February 17, 1919.

³⁰Calgary Daily Herald, March 13, 1919.

secessionist movement."³¹ He reiterated this point on March 13, 1919, when the conference opened at Paget Hall in Calgary, stating that when the Western Caucus "...suggested the meeting there was no intention of establishing any dual or secessionist movement, and he wanted...delegates to thoroughly understand that. There was no question on that point."³² Rees, succeeded as conference chairman by R. J. Tallon of the Calgary Trades and Labor Council when he was obligated to depart for a U.M.W.A. policy meeting in Indianapolis,³³ was not alone in viewing the conference in this light. A. Farmilo, Edmonton delegate, was of exactly the same opinion.³⁴

At the Calgary conference, Carl Berg, Elmer Roper, Joe Knight and others were present from Edmonton in addition to the official E.T. & L.C. delegate.³⁵ Berg and Knight naturally supported the decision of the Western Conference to repudiate "international" unionism and to establish the One Big Union type of industrial union, modelled upon the

³¹Calgary Daily Herald, March 12, 1919.

³²Calgary Daily Herald, March 13, 1919.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Edmonton Trades and Labor Council, Minutes, March 17, 1919.

³⁵It was claimed that Elmer Roper attended only the last day of the conference. See O.B.U. Bulletin, November 15, 1919, p. 5. In the article "Two Pictures", an anonymous correspondent maintained that "...if memory plays not sad tricks with us, he came with credentials post haste from Edmonton on the morning that the Convention adjourned."

Australian union of that name.³⁶ While Masters stressed the lack of "moderates" from Winnipeg and other centres at Calgary,³⁷ the presence of Farmilo and Roper, two men who really counted in organized labor in Edmonton, illustrates that the Edmonton delegation indeed included prominent "moderates". Furthermore, on the organizational committee for the Conference was F. Wheatly of Bankhead, nemesis of Joe Knight at Medicine Hat when the latter was defeated in his bid for the A.F. of L. presidency.

While newspaper reports stressed that "...every delegate present voted solidly for breaking away from international affiliation..."³⁸ and the convention adopted without discussion the viewpoint "...that the system of industrial control by selection of representatives from industries is more efficient and of greater political value than the present form of government,"³⁹ it is obvious, nevertheless, that many delegates were far from enthusiastic about the steps taken to repudiate "international" craft unionism and to establish the One Big Union. Hence, a delegate engendered considerable tumult at a session when he stated that "...he had overheard certain remarks that some of the delegates had purposely refrained from voting, and were going

³⁶Edmonton Bulletin, March 15, 1919.

³⁷Masters, op. cit., p. 36.

³⁸Calgary Daily Herald, March 14, 1919. .

³⁹Ibid.

back to their unions with the avowed intention of telling their respective members that the whole thing was a pipe dream."⁴⁰ Another delegate pointed-out that "...some of the delegates would report on the conference according to the color of their glasses."⁴¹ The names of persons voting for certain resolutions pertaining to the formation of the O.B.U. were difficult to ascertain since no roll-call votes were taken.⁴² However, it was indisputable that A. Farmilo, official E.T. & L.C. delegate to the Conference, went back to Edmonton with a jaundiced eye, determined to nip the O.B.U. scheme "in the bud" as far as Edmonton was concerned.

The March 17, 1919, E.T. & L.C. meeting was a stormy affair. The question of the Western Labor Conference was reserved until the end of the meeting (apparently a deliberate move on the part of the Council executive in light of the melee which ensued) when A. Farmilo gave his report "...pointing out that [the Conference] did not deal with the questions as originally agreed on at the Quebec conference, but dealt with the question of secession from the International Union and the formation of a separate organization, Call [sic] One Big Union." Prolonged discussion ensued with E. Owen (Plumbers Union), R. McCreath (president of the E.T. & L.C. and of the local typographical

⁴⁰Calgary Daily Herald, March 14, 1919.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Ibid.

union), J. Findlay, A. Farmilo, and A. Campbell (of the Civil Service Union) lining up against the radicals, J. R. Knight, J. Maguire, Carl Berg, and T. Russell (of the carpenters union). It was then moved by J. Heron (barbers union) and seconded by E. Owen that Farmilo's report be received and that the E.T. & L.C. repudiate the action of the Western Conference. After considerable debate -- the radicals utilizing every procedural means at their disposal to adjourn the meeting -- the Heron-Owen motion carried⁴³ but during a period of bedlam when much confusion existed as to what exactly was happening.⁴⁴

The next month was crucial as far as the loyalist-secessionist confrontation in the E.T. & L.C. was concerned. Proponents of the O.B.U. concept and supporters of the "international" unions engaged in a power-struggle which, while at times reaching deadlock, was ultimately won by the "loyalists" who dominated the Council's executive. Joe Knight had been installed during the Calgary Conference as one of

⁴³Edmonton Trades and Labor Council, Minutes, March 17, 1919. The minutes, by A. Farmilo, and the Edmonton Bulletin article ("Action of Calgary Convention Is Repudiated by Trades and Labor Council by Big Majority", March 18, 1919) by Elmer Roper give only the "loyalists'" point of view. There are some interesting differences between the Bulletin account and the Minutes, perhaps indicating that the minutes were "adjusted" by the E.T. & L.C. executive. Roper's account would be more "non-adjusted" since he had to meet a press deadline for the morning of March 18 and would not have had time to consult very much with Farmilo and McCreath.

⁴⁴Edmonton Bulletin, March 18, 1919.

the five members comprising the central committee designed to conduct a referendum on the question of the O.B.U. among all western trade unions.⁴⁵ Carl Berg was a member of the Alberta committee and responsible for propagating the O.B.U. idea in Edmonton.⁴⁶ At the April 7 Council meeting, the Edmonton Typographical Union (#604) preempted any move by the "secessionists" to introduce the O.B.U. concept by moving that a letter be sent to all affiliates of the E.T. & L.C. requesting that a detailed vote be taken on the O.B.U. question.⁴⁷ A. Farmilo and H. Clark then took the initiative against the O.B.U. industrial union concept by arguing in favor of a proposition from the Seattle Trades Council that international unions be closer affiliated along "Industrial Union Lines". The "Seattle Plan", acceptable to the American Federation of Labor, would have left in existence craft unions but would have led to a greater co-ordination in their activities. It was moved by Farmilo and seconded by Clark that:

...the Executive Committee of the Edmonton Trades Council, take up with the Executive Committee of the Alberta Federation of Labor, the Proposal as outlined by the Seattle proposal, that they carry

⁴⁵Calgary Daily Herald, March 14, 15, 1919.

⁴⁶Edmonton Bulletin, March 15, 1919.

⁴⁷Edmonton Trades and Labor Council, Minutes, April 7, 1919. Such a detailed vote would also assist the E.T. & L.C. "establishment" in ferreting out locals, and individuals within locals, tending to support the O.B.U. secessionist movement.

on a propaganda of brigining [sic] into effect these proposals. 48

After lengthy discussion, the resolution carried 20 - 19. The results of this vote show clearly the extent to which opinion had polarized within the Council, and several other close votes the same evening further confirmed this polarization.

Loyalists -- Secessionist Cleavage in Edmonton

The April 21, 1919, meeting of the E.T. & L.C. saw the victory of the "loyalists" over the "secessionists". This victory had been well-planned. On Thursday, April 17, the executive had discussed the possibility of purging delegates from the Council who were active in the formation of the O.B.U. This purgation was permitted by Article 11, Section 1, of the Constitution of the American Federation of Labor. At the executive meeting, the Vice-President, George Perkins from Machinists Lodge 559, gained the impression that this matter had been tabled for further discussion. However, the Machinists supported the O.B.U. and it is natural that Perkins' more conservative colleagues on the executive would wish to leave him with this erroneous impression.⁴⁹

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Western Labor News, May 3, 1919. Of the seven-man executive, President R. McCreath, Secretary A. Farmilo, and Trustees H. Clark, J. Findlay, and A. Campbell were "loyalists" while G. Perkins and J. Robertson (Sergeant at Arms) were pro-O.B.U.

At the April 21 meeting, McCreath ordered expelled delegates from Local 1325, United Brotherhood of Carpenters, Local 49, Federal Labor Union, and Local 4070, United Mine Workers of America.⁵⁰ Surprisingly, delegate Thompson of Machinists Lodge 559 was not ordered expelled even though about two weeks previously the local had sent a letter to the E.T. & L.C. endorsing the decisions of the Calgary conference.⁵¹ Thompson withdrew from the meeting after bringing this fact to the attention of the President.⁵² The purge, obviously well-planned and very selective in its application, was seemingly intended to isolate those locals whose leaders were most articulate in their support for the O.B.U. secessionist movement. At the same time, any massive purge would have greatly crippled organized labor in Edmonton, the ranks of which were already small and which had been built up in a milieu not overly conducive to trade union organization. After the purge, "the meeting then endorsed the action of the Executive Committee"⁵³ by a vote of 20 to 19.⁵⁴

The strategy of isolation worked, a fact which

⁵⁰Edmonton Trades and Labor Council, Minutes, April 21, 1919.

⁵¹Western Labor News, May 3, 1919.

⁵²Edmonton Trades and Labor Council, Minutes, April 21, 1919.

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Western Labor News, April 25, 1919.

became obvious during the next year. The E.T. & L.C., long established and supported by the resources of international craft unionism, confronted the Edmonton O.B.U., formed in a hasty manner and predicated mainly upon theoretical constructs, which had insufficient time to evolve into a trade union structure more suited to the practical questions of collective bargaining and the daily economic needs of its membership. The O.B.U., because of the diversity of types of which it was comprised, lacked the cohesion to withstand assaults from the government, from management, and from the trade union establishment.

The O.B.U. in Edmonton and District

Having been cast from the bosom of Mother Trades Council, sixteen delegates affected by the purge retired to another room in Labor Hall. There, a meeting ensued at which Carl Berg was elected chairman and J. Maguire pro tem. secretary. It was decided to call a mass meeting of the locals affected and of all union men who were in sympathy with the aims of O.B.U. on Sunday, April 27.⁵⁵ From this time, the O.B.U. in Edmonton existed only provisionally until October 25, 1919, when organizer Dick Johns brought into being the Edmonton Central Labor Council of the O.B.U.⁵⁶

⁵⁵Western Labor News, April 25, 1919.

⁵⁶O.B.U. Bulletin, November 1, 1919.

As is shown below, the idea of the O.B.U. was being propagated in Edmonton at a much earlier date than the O.B.U. Bulletin commenced publication (August 12, 1919). This is an indication of faulty liaison between Edmonton and Winnipeg.

During the interim, the inaugural conference of the O.B.U. (held in Calgary from June 11 to 16), the Edmonton sympathetic strike (May 26 through June, 1919), and a vigorous anti-O.B.U. campaign by the "internationals" had all transpired. Also during this period, the S.P.C. broadsheet, The Soviet (February, 1919 to August, 1919), had been in existence but its usefulness as a means of propagating the O.B.U. idea was limited in that it concentrated more on international political developments and Marxist theory than boosting the secessionist union.⁵⁷

During the period leading up to the official organization of the O.B.U. in Edmonton, Local 4070 of the U.M.W.A. continued to exist as a group of organized miners (on July 27, the Charter of District 18 was revoked by the U.M.W.A.).⁵⁸ As the miners in District 18 of the U.M.W.A. were on strike from May 23 until the end of August, 1919,⁵⁹ the forces supporting the secessionist union were able to consolidate themselves into District No. 1, Mining Department, of the O.B.U.⁶⁰ At the same time, the U.M.W.A. launched a counter-

⁵⁷The One Big Union Bulletin, published in Edmonton by the O.B.U. Prov. Executive Committee of Alberta, made its appearance during late March, 1919. Vol. 1, No. 2 was published on April 4, 1919 and assuming that this was a weekly, Vol. 1, No. 1 would have appeared on March 28, 1919, only about two weeks after the Western Labor Conference.

⁵⁸Robin, op. cit., p. 190.

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰The Searchlight, November 28, 1919.

attack, aided by a government Order-in-Council requiring all coal miners to join the international union and agree to sign a check-off for all dues, assessments, and fines.⁶¹

On December 20, the miners wage dispute was settled with the miners being given a 14% wage boost provided they were members of the U.M.W.A.⁶²

On December 1, 1919, a convention in Calgary of O.B.U. coal miners ensued at which the wage demands of the miners had been pegged at a 31% increase. At the December 1-3 Calgary convention, W. Kolling was elected as Edmonton representative on the Executive Board of the O.B.U. Coal Mining Section for District No. 1.⁶³ At this point, U.M.W.A. Local 4070 could be said to have passed from the scene.

The Federal Labor Union, #49, continued to exist after the April 21 purge (even though any reference to it was deleted from the "Union Directory" in the Edmonton Free Press as of April 26, 1919). The local supported the Edmonton sympathetic strike (May 26) and Carl Berg, an executive member, became vice-chairman of the Edmonton Strike Committee.⁶⁴ Prior to the inaugural conference of the O.B.U., Carl Berg was in Calgary completing the planning for the

⁶¹Robin, op. cit., p. 191.

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³Searchlight, December 5, 12, 1919.

⁶⁴Edmonton Free Press, May 31, 1919.

conference (June, 1919).⁶⁵ By January, 1920, Berg was secretary of the Edmonton Central Council, O.B.U.,⁶⁶ and the General Workers unit had emerged from Local 49 of the Federal Labor Union.⁶⁷

In addition to Berg's status within the Edmonton Central Council as secretary, he enjoyed the role of "labor statesman" generally within the Edmonton O.B.U. He was secretary of the Edmonton Unit of the O.B.U. Coal Miners' District Board, No. 1.⁶⁸ When the Lumber Workers' Industrial Union formed an Edmonton Branch, Berg emerged as its secretary.⁶⁹ After the O.B.U. in Edmonton disintegrated, the E.T. & L.C. had endeavored to reorganize a general laborers' union, but as of December 31, 1923 no success was attained. Ironically, Carl Berg later emerged in the Edmonton labor scene as secretary of the Hod Carriers and Building Laborers union, #92, and back in good standing with the Edmonton Council.⁷⁰ In his later years, he was reputed to be quite conservative and anti-leftist.

⁶⁵Edmonton Bulletin, June 7, 1919.

⁶⁶Searchlight, January 23, 1920.

⁶⁷Searchlight, February 27, 1920.

⁶⁸Canada, Department of Labour, Ninth Annual Report on Labour Organization in Canada, 1919 (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1920), p. 36.

⁶⁹H. A. Logan, Trade Unions in Canada -- Their Development and Functioning (Toronto: The Macmillan Co. of Canada Ltd., 1948), pp. 327-328, 335.

⁷⁰"Directory of Affiliates with the E.T. & L.C., 1945", Farmilo Papers (Provincial Archives of Alberta).

The United Brotherhood of Carpenters was not, for long, without representation in the E.T. & L.C. The delegates of Local 1325, purged on April 21 from the Council, had subsequently received an unanimous vote of confidence from their fellow carpenters and notice to this effect was sent to the central labor body.⁷¹ This unanimity was short-lived. The union's international leadership, in co-operation with the Edmonton Council and its organizing committee, re-organized the local and, by September 13, 1919, a new executive had been installed.⁷² On November 3, the Carpenters had been granted re-affiliation with the E.T. & L.C.⁷³ Some carpenters formed an O.B.U. Carpenters Section, but by the end of 1920, this section had ceased to function.⁷⁴ Of the "secessionists" in the Carpenters' union, Joe Knight, after the Western Labor Conference when he gained membership in the O.B.U. provisional central committee, devoted much of his time to organizational work for the new union and hence had limited time to spend in the Edmonton labor scene.⁷⁵ After touring Canada and the northern U.S. on behalf of the

⁷¹Edmonton Trades and Labor Council, Minutes, May 5, 1919.

⁷²"Union Directory", Edmonton Free Press, September 13, 1919.

⁷³Edmonton Trades and Labor Council, Minutes, November 3, 1919.

⁷⁴"Rent Outstanding: Considered Doubtful or Uncollectable", Edmonton Trades and Labor Council, Auditor's Report, December 31, 1922.

⁷⁵Masters, op. cit., p. 40.

O.B.U., he eventually settled in Toronto as a member of the Canadian Communist Party.⁷⁶ His ally in Local 1325, T. Russell, after spending some time in the O.B.U., eventually regained his good standing in the Carpenters' union and once again represented his local in the E.T. & L.C.⁷⁷

In addition to the carpenters, several other labor categories involved in secession from the E.T. & L.C. pertained to the building trades. These included sheetmetal workers and bricklayers. The Sheetmetal Workers, local 371, withdrew after April 21 and did not return to the fold until June 7, 1920.⁷⁸ While on July 21, 1919, a local of the Bricklayers, Masons and Plasterers' International Union gained representation on the Council,⁷⁹ it did not take long for the O.B.U. to syphon off much of its support in Edmonton. Hence, by February, 1920 a group of bricklayers found its way into the Edmonton O.B.U., W. G. Brookes being elected secretary of the bricklayers' unit.⁸⁰ Brookes was instrumental in organizing a mass meeting of the building trades workers on February 11, this meeting protesting against in-

⁷⁶William Rodney, Soldiers of the International: A History of the Communist Party of Canada, 1919-1929 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968), p. 166

⁷⁷Edmonton Trades and Labor Council, Minutes, November 5, 1923.

⁷⁸Edmonton Trades and Labor Council, Minutes, June 7, 1920.

⁷⁹Edmonton Trades and Labor Council, Minutes, July 21, 1919.

⁸⁰Searchlight, February 6, 1920.

creases in the cost-of-living since 1914 and demanding that wage levels be raised to compensate for the cost-of-living increases.⁸¹ The O.B.U. militancy on such questions as inflation had so weakened the building trades locals affiliated with the E.T. & L.C. that the labor body felt constrained on May 17 to request the American Federation of Labor to appoint an organizer for the various crafts in the building industry of Edmonton.⁸² In June, an organizer for the Carpenters and Joiners Union was in Edmonton,⁸³ and it was announced on July 19 that 27 new members were secured for its Edmonton local.⁸⁴ During the same period, the "official" bricklayers union local had to be reconstituted since, because of Brookes' activities, the membership had been temporarily seduced into terminating its affiliation with the Edmonton Council.⁸⁵

Masters, relying on Logan's History of Trade Union Organization in Canada, indicated that "[b]ranches of the International Association of Machinists joined" the O.B.U.⁸⁶

⁸¹Edmonton Trades and Labor Council, Minutes, February 16, 1920.

⁸²Edmonton Trades and Labor Council, Minutes, May 17, 1920.

⁸³Edmonton Trades and Labor Council, Minutes, June 7, 1920.

⁸⁴Edmonton Trades and Labor Council, Minutes, July 19, 1920.

⁸⁵Edmonton Trades and Labor Council, Minutes, September 20, 1920.

⁸⁶Masters, op. cit., p. 139.

This is an incomplete picture of the type of transportation worker supporting the secessionist movement in Edmonton. Local 559 of the International Association of Machinists involved workers at the machine shops of the Grand Trunk Pacific R.R. Because this local had supported the O.B.U. and had notified the E.T. & L.C. executive to this effect, its delegate to the Council, E. Thompson, was expelled. This support of the secessionist union, more than just indicating the militancy of the machinists, exemplified the widespread pro-O.B.U. sentiment among unionists within the Edmonton sector of the railroad industry. For example, J. Robertson, who was unseated from the E.T. & L.C., was a member of the Brotherhood of Railway Carmen, Local 530, and was employed with the Edmonton, Dunvegan, & British Columbia R.R.⁸⁷ J. Lakeman, a member of local 389 of the B.R.C. and employed on the C.N.R., emerged as secretary of the Transportation Unit of the O.B.U. by December 12, 1919.⁸⁸ The activities of the O.B.U. on the railways alarmed the international headquarters of various craft unions sufficiently to warrant vigorous campaigns to prevent unionists from deserting to the O.B.U. Hence, one organizer for the Carmen felt constrained to warn each "defector" that if he did not hurry back into the international, he would "be the 'last

⁸⁷Edmonton Trades and Labor Council, Minutes, January 20, 1919.

⁸⁸Searchlight, December 12, 1919.

man' carrying an O.B.U. card."⁸⁹

Lakeman's involvement in winning over support for the O.B.U. among railway workers occurred at an early period in the organization's history. Present at the April 21 E.T. & L.C. meeting as delegate for Carmen's local #398,⁹⁰ he was probably one of those who staged the walkout after the four pro-O.B.U. locals were expelled. As a worker for the C.N.R., he was likely the correspondent for the O.B.U. Bulletin who reported:

Blacksmiths and Helpers employed in the C.N.R. shops went over to the O.B.U. 100 per cent. Carmen on the C.N.R. have formed a unit with something like 35 members to start with. Machinists and Helpers formed a unit over 50 per cent strong....

The men employed on the Edmonton, Dunvegan, & B.C. Railroad have also gone O.B.U., taking 65 per cent of the membership. Reports indicate the rest are expected over soon. 91

These optimistic reports were restrained in comparison to those of organizer Dick Johns, from Winnipeg, who reported "that the R.R. boys have established three units with a 90% organization."⁹² Obviously large numbers of railway workers were defecting to the O.B.U. in spite of possible exaggerations in Johns' estimates of this rate of defection. By July 21, the West Edmonton Lodge #448 of the Brotherhood of Railway Carmen had withdrawn its delegates from the E.T. &

⁸⁹Searchlight, January 30, 1920.

⁹⁰Edmonton Trades and Labor Council, Minutes, April 21, 1919.

⁹¹O.B.U. Bulletin, October 25, 1919.

⁹²O.B.U. Bulletin, November 1, 1919.

L.C.⁹³ Yet, Lakeman's own local, #398, retained its affiliation with the Council throughout the 1919-1920 period.

The reported membership of the Edmonton O.B.U. Transportation Unit was 160 as of December, 1919.⁹⁴ Despite "all the slimy tactics used by certain upholders of the international machine,"⁹⁵ the Transportation Unit managed to increase its strength further although its membership of 168, as of March, 1920, hardly was indicative of runaway growth.⁹⁶ The C.B.R.E. on the whole remained aloof from the O.B.U., in spite of arguments by the secessionists that this large Canadian union should find its home in the new movement,⁹⁷ since "[u]nder the One Big Union form of organization, the workers in one industry would be subject to the dictation of workers in other industries."⁹⁸ It was this same objection which dominated the thinking of delegates from the Lumber Workers' Industrial Union at the 1920 Port Arthur convention of the O.B.U., causing them to desert the secessionist movement and consequently to condemn it to

⁹³Edmonton Trades and Labor Council, Minutes, July 21, 1919.

⁹⁴Searchlight, December 12, 1919.

⁹⁵Searchlight, February 6, 1920.

⁹⁶O.B.U. Bulletin, March 24, 1920.

⁹⁷O.B.U. Bulletin, October 11, 1919.

⁹⁸W. E. Greening and M. M. Maclean, It Was Never Easy, 1908-1958: A History of the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway, Transport and General Workers (Ottawa: Mutual Press Ltd., 1961), p. 65.

ultimate oblivion as a mass-based organization.⁹⁹

The fate of those personalities who had actively fought for the O.B.U. in Edmonton, or whose locals supported the secessionist union, varied. J. Robertson of the Dunvegan Carmen was not only stripped of his honorary executive post, Sergeant at Arms of the Trades Council, but was publicly vilified in the official organ of the E.T. & L.C., the Edmonton Free Press.¹⁰⁰ This personality factor -- one can be sure that Robertson and his fellow members of the Dunvegan Carmen rankled at the treatment received from the Council establishment and the Free Press -- probably accounts for the fact that, as of December 31, 1922, the Dunvegan local had failed to reaffiliate with the Trades Council in spite of repeated attempts of the Edmonton body to get it back into the fold. Local 448 of the B.R.C. was readmitted to the Council on July 3, 1922.¹⁰¹ By this date, J. Lakeman was a member in good standing with Local 448 and represented his local at the July 3 meeting.¹⁰² He had regained his membership with the B.R.C. when he forsook the O.B.U. in favor of communism. As Canadian communists favored as of 1922 the strategy of "boring from within" tradit-

⁹⁹ Logan, op. cit., p. 327.

¹⁰⁰ Edmonton Trades and Labor Council, Minutes, August 18, 1919.

¹⁰¹ Edmonton Trades and Labor Council, Minutes, July 3, 1922.

¹⁰² Ibid.

ional craft unions in order to promote industrial unionism and radicalism (the Foster plan),¹⁰³ Lakeman adopted a new role as "gadfly" within the B.R.C. and the E.T. & L.C., perhaps forgetting his statement from an earlier time:

I still hold that if you are satisfied with your present conditions "that is to be a wage slave" then your place is in the International Carmen's Union. 104

It can be said that the O.B.U. in Edmonton was formed as a result of economic dislocation arising from World War I. Its leadership and proponents comprised a conglomerate of types: Marxian socialists (Knight, McGuire) and radicals (Lakeman); unionists dissatisfied with the belated actions of the E.T. & L.C. in confronting serious problems of post-war dislocation (Brookes, T. Russell, and Robertson), and advocates of Canadian and industrial unionism. As each of these components of the conglomerate found new ways of satisfying his aspirations, the leadership of the Edmonton O.B.U. dispersed and its rank and file found their way back into the "international" craft unions affiliated with the E.T. & L.C. The health of the E.T. & L.C. was hence partially restored, for leadership positions within that body had been assumed by conservative upholders of "international" craft unionism after the April purge of O.B.U. supporters, and a more representative Council ensued when former secessionists drifted back into the central

¹⁰³Logan, op. cit., pp. 333-336.

¹⁰⁴Searchlight, February 27, 1920.

labor body.

This regrouping of Edmonton labor was badly needed by the E.T. & L.C. The streetrailwaymen's union had disaffiliated from the Council on May 19, 1919 "...until such time as the Unions who had been expelled for O.B.U. activities were reseatd."¹⁰⁵ While the streetrailwaymen never joined the O.B.U., it was not until December 6, 1920 that they gained reaffiliation with the E.T. & L.C.¹⁰⁶ This delay was the result of the local's dissatisfaction with the Council and of the union's own internal problems, not a result of the central body's reluctance to reseat its delegates. With the streetrailwaymen out of the Council until the end of 1920, and with the C.B.R.E. disaffiliating itself with the Edmonton labor body early in 1920 (because of a dispute with the T.L.C. of Canada over its status in relationship to the Brotherhood of Railway Clerks and Freight Handlers and not because of the O.B.U. issue), the E.T. & L.C. was in serious financial straits during the early 1920's due to a lack of revenue from per capita taxes. This situation, so serious that the Council's charter with the American Feder-

¹⁰⁵Edmonton Trades and Labor Council, Minutes, May 19, 1919.

To some extent, the "withdrawal" of the streetrailwaymen was somewhat of an empty gesture since their local was eighteen months in arrears of dues and its affiliation with the Council was subject to automatic cancellation several months before the May 19 meeting. See Edmonton Free Press, May 24, 1919.

¹⁰⁶Edmonton Trades and Labor Council, Minutes, December 6, 1920.

ation of Labor was revoked due to non-payment of per capita taxes, necessitating reaffiliation with the A.F. of L.,¹⁰⁷ was remedied only when the O.B.U.'s failure paved the way for an influx of ex-secessionists back into the Council.

¹⁰⁷Edmonton Trades and Labor Council, Minutes, February 16, 1920.

Chapter IV

THE EDMONTON SYMPATHETIC STRIKE

Origins of Strike

The Winnipeg General Strike, having commenced on May 15, 1919, triggered off repercussions in Edmonton which engendered apprehension on the part of the trade union establishment as represented in the rump Trades Council. Since many of the striking unions in Winnipeg were international craft unions, represented in the Metal Trades Council and Building Trades Council of that city,¹ the E.T. & L.C. could not repudiate the actions of its Winnipeg counterpart. At the same time, O.B.U. organization had already proceeded in Edmonton, and secessionist feeling predominated among many of the rank-and-file of unions still affiliated with the Edmonton Council. The O.B.U. could only stand to gain if the E.T. & L.C. remained aloof from the Winnipeg situation.

At the Council meeting of May 19, the Federated Railway Trades introduced a resolution expressing sympathy with the Winnipeg strikers.² The federation comprised all unionized shop workers in Edmonton's railways³ and was part

¹D. C. Masters, The Winnipeg General Strike (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1950), p. 40.

²Edmonton Trades and Labor Council, Minutes, May 19, 1919.

³Canada, Department of Labour, Ninth Annual Report on Labour Organization in Canada, 1919 (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1920), p. 135.

of a nation-wide body already involved in delicate wage negotiations with the Canadian Railway War Board at Montreal.⁴ As their Winnipeg counterparts were on strike, not unexpectedly they pushed for the development of a sympathetic strike since railway tie-ups at Winnipeg would have serious repercussions along all transcontinental lines linking Edmonton to the Manitoba city. The federated railway trades could not be ignored by "international" affiliates in Edmonton since the credentials of the federation were impeccable, this grouping being part of Railway Employees' Department, No. 4, which was working under charter from the American Federation of Labor.⁵

The frustrations of workers accumulated during the War and during the first months of post-War readjustment created a potentially dangerous situation for the craft union leadership as well as for the executives of larger unions affiliated with the E.T. & L.C. To ignore the anger of rank-and-file unionists which gave rise to a wide-spread general strike sentiment would only play into the hands of the secessionists. The Edmonton Council was reputed to be the bastion of trade union conservatism, or, as put by the Western Labor News, "...the most reactionary of all the Labor Councils in Western Canada."⁶ Yet, the leadership of

⁴Edmonton Free Press, May 24, 1919.

⁵Canada, Department of Labour, loc. cit.

⁶Western Labor News, May 3, 1919.

this conservative body was weakened when its secretary, A. Farmilo, was appointed "Canadian representative of the American Federation of Labor in the capacity of organizer."⁷ While still officially secretary of the E.T. & L.C., and assisted during his absence by J. J. McCormack,⁸ the new duties of Farmilo, which involved the reorganization of trades councils and international unions undermined by O.B.U. secessionists, involved working in Calgary and points west.⁹ Farmilo had been secretary of the Edmonton Council for the whole World War I period, and enjoyed a pivotal position in the Edmonton labor movement. His absence during much of the May-June, 1919, period meant that a high status "loyalist" would be unable to exert maximum influence to subdue forces of unrest.¹⁰

The rebellious mood of organized labor in Edmonton could not be subdued. This being the case, the trade union establishment adopted the strategy of allowing a sympathetic strike vote among all affiliates of the E.T. & L.C. Should a general sympathetic strike ensue, it would be hopefully short-lived in that strikers, deprived of income for a period of time and pressured by public opinion, would see the

⁷Edmonton Free Press, May 24, 1919.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Martin Robin, Radical Politics and Canadian Labour, 1880-1930 (Kingston: Industrial Relations Centre, Queen's University, 1968), p. 186.

¹⁰Edmonton Trades and Labor Council, Minutes, May-June, 1919.

merits of limiting their strike activity. At the same time, much of the workers' anger would have been discharged, and the logic of drained financial resources would prevail. The Edmonton Council could not have been accused of betraying the cause of the Winnipeg strikers, and at the same time it could demonstrate to waverers the falacious thinking of political radicals and anarcho-syndicalists. Above all, the initiative must not be taken over by the "secessionists": any strike action must retain a strong "loyalist" influence.

The May 19 E.T. & L.C. meeting suspended its regular order of business to discuss the Winnipeg situation.¹¹ After prolonged discussion, it was resolved that sympathy with the Winnipeg strikers be extended, that the resolution of the Federated Railway Trades be endorsed, and that the E.T. & L.C. executive call a meeting of the executive committees of all Edmonton unions.¹² The resultant meeting ensued on May 21 at Labor Hall. Not unexpectedly, it was George Perkins of Machinists Lodge #559 who moved, and Carl Berg of the Federal Labor Union who seconded, that:

...the executive of all local unions be notified to take a strike vote, the said strike to take place Monday on May 26, at 11 a.m., and the result of such voting to be returnable by Sunday, May 25....¹³

The results of the strike vote were to be compiled by John

¹¹Ibid., May 19, 1919.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Edmonton Bulletin, May 22, 1919.

McCormack of the Civil Service Union, #52, J. Findlay of the machinists' union, and Carl Berg.¹⁴ It was also decided at the May 21 meeting that each local union elect two representatives to act as a central strike committee and that the strike committee elect an executive and sub-committees as the situation warranted.¹⁵ This decision, not part of the original resolution dealing with the strike vote, could not help but favor the smaller and more conservative craft unions in that these locals would have more influence, per capita, than the larger and more militant unions in the Central Strike Committee.

When the balloting committee met on May 25, 1,676 affirmative votes and 506 negative votes were counted. By union, 34 locals were in favor of the strike and four (garment workers, musicians, sheetmetal workers, and postal workers) opposed it.¹⁶ As a total of 49 locals were asked to vote,¹⁷ some locals did not commit themselves on the strike issue. Interestingly enough, the locals of E.T. & L.C. President Robert McCreath (Typographical Union, No. 604), Secretary A. Farmilo (Stonecutters' Association), and Trustee Alex Campbell (Letter Carrier's Federation) did not

¹⁴Edmonton Free Press, May 24, 1919.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Edmonton Free Press, May 31, 1919.
In spite of this negative vote by the garment workers, employees at the Edmonton G.W.G. Factory were on strike on May 26 and 27. Edmonton Bulletin, May 28, 1919.

¹⁷Edmonton Bulletin, May 26, 1919.

vote on the general strike issue.¹⁸ Neither did Elmer Roper's local of the Printing Pressmen's union.¹⁹ The railway carmen supported the strike overwhelmingly with the Dunvegan carmen being unanimous in their support. Two of the three machinists' locals endorsed the strike with very large majorities, as did Joe Knight's carpenters' local (which possessed only two dissenters, one of them being, perhaps, Ald. A. J. Kinney). Of 151 coal miners voting from three miners' locals, only two voted against the strike (but since District 18 of the U.M.W.A. was on strike as of May 23, the miners' vote was mainly of symbolic value). The building trades were overwhelming in their endorsement of strike action apart from the sheetmetal workers, and all 189 voters from Carl Berg's Federal Labor Union local endorsed the move. Most railway unions (including the C.B.R.E.) voted in the affirmative as did the streetrailwaymen. The elite railwaymen of the running trades did not vote. School teachers and clergymen were asked to vote, but not surprisingly they remained uncommitted. On the other hand, the City of Edmonton Police Association did vote, and only two out of fifty-nine policemen opposed the strike.²⁰

Directing the Edmonton sympathetic strike was an eight-man executive. The executive was dominated initially

¹⁸Edmonton Free Press, May 31, 1919.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid.

by three unionists: J. W. Findley, chairman; Carl Berg, vice-chairman; and J. J. McCormack, secretary.²¹ The latter was president of his Civic Service Union (local #52), and when the local's membership voted on May 29 to resume its work with the City, McCormack found it necessary to terminate his secretarial duties at Labor Hall and to return to his job with the telephone department.²² Replacing him was W. J. Marshall.²³ In addition to the central executive were various sub-committees -- a press committee, a finance committee, and a safety and health committee.²⁴ Later, to help families of striking employees weather the storm, a relief committee was added.²⁵ J. O'Brian was designated treasurer and head of the finance committee. G. Perkins emerged as head of the safety and health committee while F. E. Mercer headed the press, or publicity, committee.²⁶ J. Hawthorne was the eighth executive member.²⁷

The executive was not handed a carte blanche to conduct the strike as it thought fit. As each Edmonton local union sent two delegates to the Central Strike Committee,

²¹Ibid.

²²Edmonton Bulletin, May 31, 1919.

²³Edmonton Bulletin, June 11, 1919.

²⁴Edmonton Bulletin, May 26, 1919.

²⁵Edmonton Bulletin, June 11, 1919.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Ibid.

nearly 100 individuals comprised this body during the initial phase of the strike. The committee, meeting twice daily, decided all questions of policy.²⁸ This undoubtedly restrained such executive members as Carl Berg and George Perkins who would have liked to have had a complete civic shutdown (especially Berg who was very visible during the month following May 26). As occurred in Winnipeg, a strike bulletin was published, this appearing as special strike editions of the Edmonton Free Press.²⁹ The first strike edition emphasized the fact that, even though the police association voted overwhelmingly to walk out and that it stood "...ready to act at the call of the committee,"³⁰ the policemen were still functioning and that, for the purposes of public safety, a short walkout by the city firemen was to be swiftly terminated. Water supply was to be maintained, although water pressure was reduced, and doctors and hospitals would be granted telephone service.³¹

The Edmonton and Winnipeg Strikes Compared

The Edmonton strike was a rather faint reflection of developments which had ensued in Winnipeg since May 15. To maintain morale among strikers, labor rallies were held

²⁸Edmonton Free Press, May 31, 1919.

²⁹Edmonton Bulletin, May 27, 1919.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Ibid.

nightly.³² While the moving picture operators and stage employees were unanimous in their support for the strike, theatres were allowed to remain open.³³ Bread, cream, and milk deliveries were not terminated at all;³⁴ thus, the unpleasant situation which resulted in Winnipeg, involving a wastage of dairy products and bad public relations for the strikers,³⁵ was avoided in Edmonton. Restaurant service was periodically disrupted, but food stores stayed open after the strike's commencement.³⁶ In the case of restaurants, many cooks and waiters extended diners a surprise when, at 11:00 a.m. on May 26 they stopped working. By 4:00 p.m. all restaurants had reopened and no repetition of the Winnipeg experience regarding food-services recurred.³⁷ While at Winnipeg deliveries of essential foodstuffs were allowed if placards were used stating that these deliveries were made "By Authority of the Strike Committee", ³⁸ the liberality of the Edmonton strike committee was such that the Edmonton Towel Supply Co., hardly a distributor of an essential commodity, was able to make deliveries upon agreeing to

³²Edmonton Bulletin, June 7, 1919.

³³Edmonton Bulletin, May 27, 1919.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Masters, op. cit., pp. 51-54.

³⁶Edmonton Bulletin, May 27, 1919.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Masters, loc. cit.

publicize the fact that it was "Operating until further notice by permission of the strike committee."³⁹ It was perhaps in the area of essential services that Edmonton experienced difficulties remotely approaching those of Winnipeg.

Electric power was suddenly cut off at 11:00 a.m. on the first day of the strike.⁴⁰ Electrical service was subsequently restored by Tuesday morning and no repetition of this serious development occurred.⁴¹ Yet, this had an effect on the production of the Edmonton Journal; the Bulletin was able to assume almost normal newspaper production by making use of gasoline engines hastily installed.⁴² Business at the Edmonton city hall ceased when all civic employees there went on strike with the exception of departmental superintendents.⁴³ On May 28, the strike committee conducted prolonged discussions as to how to make the strike more effective, and seriously considered cutting off all telephone service.⁴⁴ As it was, the city telephone superintendent had to commute from telephone exchange to exchange in a frantic attempt to maintain telephone service.⁴⁵ By

³⁹Edmonton Bulletin, May 27, 1919.

⁴⁰Edmonton Bulletin, May 28, 1919.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Edmonton Bulletin, May 27, 1919.

⁴⁴Edmonton Bulletin, May 28, 1919.

⁴⁵Ibid.

May 29, all utilities except the street railway were in operation. On Friday, May 30, the civic employees and striking electrical workers appeared for work.⁴⁶ Ironically, they had appeared at city hall on May 27 to pick up their paycheques and had to be reminded by Mayor Clarke that they were on strike and could not expect payment as city payroll clerks were among their number.⁴⁷ This dilemma was solved on Friday morning when this category of workers ended their strike.

After the first week of the Edmonton strike, normality was, on the whole, restored in Edmonton. By Monday, June 2, any crisis atmosphere which may have existed from May 26 to May 31 had disappeared. The central strike committee maintained its existence through the month of June and the Edmonton strike was officially in existence throughout this period. After the Winnipeg strike ended on June 26, the strike committee remained in existence only to await reports from two delegates it dispatched to Winnipeg, E. Eastham and J. Findlay, who were entrusted with the tasks of eliciting accurate information about the situation in Manitoba's capital and to assist in the reaching of a settlement there.⁴⁸ Labor unrest did exist in Edmonton during the month of June, but much of this was either an extension of

⁴⁶Edmonton Bulletin, May 30, 1919.

⁴⁷Edmonton Bulletin, May 28, 1919.

⁴⁸Edmonton Free Press, June 7, 28, 1919.

unrest that had existed among certain union locals for a considerable period of time, or part of a wide-spread series of industrial disputes that transcended civic, and even provincial, boundaries. Of occupational categories confined to the city and immediate district, the building trades and teamsters held out the longest. Many teamsters did not return to work until Friday, June 13. Of course, many railway workers were still on strike as of that date.⁴⁹

Edmonton Labor Unrest in Relationship to External Factors

Mention has already been made of the decision of most miners in District 18 of the U.M.W.A. to strike during the month of May. In addition, the men of the running trades on the railways were in the process of taking a nation-wide strike vote at the time of the Edmonton sympathetic strike.⁵⁰ However, participation in the Edmonton strike by the important running trades unions did not ensue as these were forbidden to cease working by their international headquarters.⁵¹ As a result, there was no complete shutdown of railway service to Edmonton even though some passenger trains had difficulty meeting schedules and offering dining car service and other amenities, and express and freight deliveries were curtailed on some lines. The federated shopmen of Edmonton were disgruntled because of the slow progress in negotiations

⁴⁹Edmonton Bulletin, June 16, 1919.

⁵⁰Edmonton Free Press, May 31, 1919.

⁵¹Edmonton Bulletin, May 29, 1919.

over wages and hours taking place in Montreal, these negotiations having commenced on May 12.⁵² On the first day of the Edmonton strike, only shop foremen remained at their jobs.⁵³ A meeting of the shopmen -- railway machinists, boilermakers, blacksmiths, car repairmen, electricians, and steamfitters -- on May 27 decided almost unanimously in favor of strike action. However, such a strike was conditional upon all federated shopmen from coast-to-coast reaching a similar decision.⁵⁴ In spite of a lack of official endorsement of a walkout from international union headquarters, shopmen on strike as of May 26 persisted in their action well into June. As was reported in the June 16 edition of the Bulletin, railway workers still on strike included freight handlers, boilermakers, maintenance-of-way men, and a few clerks.⁵⁵ By this time, also, the federated railway shopmen were officially on strike when their bargaining agent, the Railway Shopmen of America -- No. 4, had reached an impasse with the Railway War Board.⁵⁶

Another outstanding labor dispute which coincided with the Edmonton sympathetic strike was the one between the streetrailwaymen and the City of Edmonton. Mention has been

⁵²Edmonton Free Press, May 24, 1919.

⁵³Edmonton Bulletin, May 27, 1919.

⁵⁴Edmonton Bulletin, May 28, 1919.

⁵⁵Edmonton Bulletin, June 16, 1919.

⁵⁶Edmonton Free Press, June 14, 1919.

previously made of the difficulties experienced by the streetrailwaymen's union during the World War I period. Relations between the E.T. & L.C. and the streetcar operator's local were often strained because of the fact that the local believed that it had been denied effective support from the Council during previous strike action in 1917. Hence, the withdrawal of the local from the central labor body on May 19 was due not just to the O.B.U. issue, but perhaps more importantly to long-standing friction between the two labor entities. Before the Western Labor Conference, serious trouble on the Edmonton Street Railway was predicted in the Edmonton Bulletin on February 18, 1919. Then, a dispute existed between the streetrailwaymen's local and the city utilities committee as to the status of returning soldiers as far as seniority was concerned. The union local adopted the position that there be no alteration of the current seniority list, while several aldermen maintained that employees who left the street railway to enlist should be placed at the top of the seniority list.⁵⁷ With this type of rancor existing between the city council and the unionists, it is not surprising that the street railway system stopped functioning on May 26 and full street car service was not resumed until May 30, 1919.⁵⁸

⁵⁷Edmonton Bulletin, February 18, 1919.

⁵⁸Edmonton Bulletin, May 30, 1919.

An Analysis of the Edmonton Sympathetic Strike

During the week of June 22 to June 28, nearly all categories of worker striking in Edmonton returned to work.⁵⁹ Except for the first week, no great disruption occurred within the City of Edmonton. There was no unusual violence, and no undue damage to property. The reason for this relative tranquility was due, in part, to the conservative leadership dominating the E.T. & L.C. as well as to the influence of international craft unionism within the city. National unions of any significance, such as the C.B.R.E., were also dominated by leadership which could in no way be considered "radical".⁶⁰

Other factors must be considered. The Edmonton Free Press, which proclaimed itself the "...official Publication of Organized Labor in Edmonton,"⁶¹ maintained a conservative stance from the time it commenced publication on Saturday, April 12, 1919 until the end of that strife-ridden year. The weekly not only exuded an image of moderation and sweet reason, but launched vigorous assaults against the O.B.U. secessionists, lumping them together with

⁵⁹Edmonton Free Press, June 28, 1919.

⁶⁰A. R. Mosher, during an address at the Tenth Convention of the C.B.R.E. in September, 1919, criticised the actions of union members in Winnipeg who walked out during the general strike there. President Mosher also was critical of the O.B.U. concept. See W. E. Greening and M. M. Maclean, It Was Never Easy: 1908-1958 (Ottawa: Mutual Press Ltd., 1961), pp. 63-65.

⁶¹Edmonton Free Press, April 12, 1919.

Bolshevists, revolutionists, seditionists, Reds, engineers of bloodbaths, autocrats, etc. While this paper was apparently launched through the efforts of an aggressive entrepreneur who started it "...solely as a business venture,"⁶² its existence during the 1919-1920 period was extremely fortuitous for the E.T. & L.C. establishment. During the same meeting at which the Council repudiated the decisions of the Western Labor Conference, the agreement reached between Henry J. Roche, Publisher, and the executive of the Trades Council was announced.⁶³ At the August 4 meeting of the E.T. & L.C., the Publisher of the Free Press and its editor were made honorary members of the Council.⁶⁴

Henry Roche, who founded the Edmonton Free Press, was an advertizing man who made an agreement with the E.T. & L.C. that, in return for giving prominence to news of the labor movement, the Council would sponsor the paper and endeavor to build its circulation.⁶⁵ All news items relating to labor were to be the responsibility of the Press Committee of the Trades Council while all content in the correspondence columns and the editorial page would be the prerogative of Mr. Roche. Until August 23, 1919, much of the editorial

⁶²Elmer E. Roper, Letter to William Askin, November 9, 1972.

⁶³Edmonton Trades and Labor Council, Minutes, March 17, 1919.

⁶⁴Ibid., August 4, 1919.

⁶⁵Elmer E. Roper, loc. cit.

comment was written by a school teacher, William Todd, and many of his editorials were not representative of the views of the Edmonton Council.⁶⁶ This being the case, Elmer Roper was appointed editorial writer on a part time basis. However, during the critical May-June period in 1919, Todd's editorials and editing (and writing of headlines, many of which were themselves mini-editorials) tended to give the newspaper a conservative tone.

Some of the statements made in the Free Press would obviously give a militant trade unionist reason for rage. "Today the interests of employe [sic] and employer are identical" was affirmed on April 12, while on April 26 it was announced that the "Delegates to [the] Central Labor Preaching Trade Union Sedition and Organization of 'One Big Union' as Opposed to A.F. of L. Are Put Outside Trade Union Trenches." On the editorial page of this same edition it was revealed that a bloodbath awaited Canadians if the forces of revolution triumphed, and that there existed in "our own Canada" an element, the Reds, who were out to gain control over established trade union machinery and, if successful, would "...bring about chaos and political revolution...." Such an event was frustrated in Edmonton because of "The House Cleaning" which occurred within the Trades Council which did not allow itself to be "...stampeded to Bolsheviki tactics...."

⁶⁶Ibid.

During the period of the Edmonton sympathetic strike, the Free Press attempted to put the best possible face on things. The real causes of labor unrest were, it was maintained, "Exploitation, Profiteering and Combinations of Capital..."⁶⁷ Several articles in the May 31 edition emphasized that the Winnipeg strike was essentially a question of securing collective bargaining rights for the Metal Trades Council. In the editorial page, it was advocated that the Edmonton strikers return to work:

Edmonton Organized Labor went on strike to express unmistakable sympathy with the Winnipeg strikers, and provide a Labor demonstration which would echo in the halls of the national Parliament. That End has been accomplished.

.....
 [The confidence of Edmonton citizens]...in their fellow citizens constituting Trades Unionism in this city was sufficient to cause them to bear any inconveniences precipitated withour [sic] murmuring.

Now that this labor demonstration has been made; now that it has reached Ottawa; now that the principle of collective bargaining is understood by practically all people...Edmonton Organized Labor should go back to work. 68

An editorial on June 7 concluded that "General Strikes [Are] Not Practical" and denounced the O.B.U. and all other elements in society "...prepared for any extremity -- even revolution".⁶⁹ The June 21 edition of the paper denounced the use of "strong arm" methods in Manitoba when

⁶⁷Edmonton Free Press, May 31, 1919.

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹Edmonton Free Press, June 7, 1919.

the Winnipeg strike leaders were arrested, while the June 28 edition devoted lengthy coverage to the activities of the Winnipeg Citizens Committee of One Thousand as reported by J. Findlay, Edmonton's strike representative at Winnipeg who had just returned to the city. Most Free Press writing during the May-June period was in a similar vein, reflecting the views of the E.T. & L.C. establishment and attacking all threats to the status quo in organized labor, whether from capital, from the government, or from the O.B.U. secessionists.

While the circulation of the Free Press was obviously limited, the fact that it possessed large amounts of advertising each issue, besides contributing to the financial health of the publication until it was succeeded by the Alberta Labor News in September, 1920, indicates that it had sufficient circulation to warrant such advertising and that the image of Edmonton organized labor was not so black that Edmonton businessmen were unwilling to pay for such advertising. The paper maintained a "moderate image" for labor in Edmonton at a time when its established leadership greatly desired such an image. The Edmonton dailies were giving prominence to the Russian civil war during the 1918-1919 period, and the Canadian public tended to see a "Bolshevik under every bush" during this time. The aggressive attack against "Bolsheviki tactics" by the Edmonton labor organ may have served the purpose of rendering somewhat respectable organized labor at a time when it sought such

respectability; the lack of any substantial body of radical socialists in Edmonton, however, indicates that the attack against "Reds" by the Free Press was a classical example of the "straw man" situation. It is ironic that Jan Lakeman, after returning to the E.T. & L.C. as delegate for his Car-mens' local, introduced numerous resolutions which were often given favorable consideration, or at least not outright opposition, by such "loyalists" as Elmer Roper at Council meetings, although his motions were often "watered down" before they received E.T. & L.C. endorsation.⁷⁰ This not altogether hostile treatment of one of Edmonton's few genuine "Reds" prominent in the labor movement during the early 1920's indicates that behind the E.T. & L.C. rhetoric of 1919 directed against chimerical "Reds", "seditionists", etc. lay the very tangible issue of trade union continent-alism ("internationalism") vs. secessionism (with its nationalistic, pro-Canadian, attributes). By 1923, Lakeman was Industrial Organizer, District 5, of the Workers' Party of Canada.⁷¹ At this time, the membership of the E.T. & L.C., rather than conducting witch-hunts, was willing to tolerate gadflies such as Lakeman and even to send fraternal delegates

⁷⁰ See, for example, the August 13, 1923, Minutes of the Edmonton Trades and Labor Council which record the collaboration of Elmer Roper and Jan Lakeman in the redrafting of a resolution, to be presented to the annual convention of the Trades and Labor Congress at Vancouver, regarding the amalgamation of unions into industrial unions.

⁷¹ Edmonton Trades and Labor Council, Minutes, March 5, 1923.

to conventions of the Workers' Party of Canada.⁷²

Another important factor explaining the relatively tranquil nature of the Edmonton sympathetic strike was the attitude of Edmonton's mayor, Joe Clarke. Clarke had been friendly towards organized labor during his term of office in the 1919-1920 period, and relied upon it for political backing. The Edmonton City Council, realizing that a general sympathetic strike was impending for May 26, 1919, called a special meeting for May 23, 1919.⁷³ Prior to this meeting, Clarke sent telegrams to Edmonton's three M.P.'s as well as to the mayors of five cities in Alberta and Saskatchewan. His telegram to the mayors stated that he was of the opinion that

...great hardship and loss will be caused disinterested cities and people unaffected by matters at Winnipeg if Federal government does not take steps to prevent unduly flouting labour unions and stop such actions as refusing to recognize unions in negotiations with employers....⁷⁴

Such an attitude did not endear Clarke to some of his fellow civic politicians, especially those involved with Edmonton's Board of Trade. In response to Ald. M. Martin's remark at a special joint meeting of aldermen and trade unionists Monday, May 26, to the effect that it was possible that a citizens' committee would be formed to operate city utilities and transport services, the mayor stated that "...he was not

⁷²Ibid., December 18, 1922.

⁷³Edmonton Bulletin, May 23, 1919.

⁷⁴Ibid.

going to have any Bolshevik Board of Trade interfering or he would put the city under martial law."⁷⁵ The mayor's strategy of cooling passions among labor ranks, and containing hard-liners within the business community and their representatives at City Council was successful, for the Edmonton sympathetic strike was distinctly on the wane at the end of its first week.

Later, Joe Clarke was prominent in protesting against the arrest of leaders of the Winnipeg General Strike. He had never hurled the City of Edmonton police against the local unionists (and considering the strike vote among the police force favoring the sympathetic strike it would have been very impolitic to do so) and his police chief George Hill had later described the conduct of all Edmonton men on strike as being "...commendable and exceedingly gratifying."⁷⁶ Clarke later described Winnipeg as being "The Joke City" and contrasted the unrest there during and after the Winnipeg general strike to the love-fest which ensued in Edmonton early in the 1920's:

An Edmonton First Club has been organized, with the heaviest tax payer in the city, Mr. John A. McDougall as Chairman, and James Findlay, who was Chairman of the Edmonton sympathetic strike Committee last June, as Secretary, and it looks at least if one city was making an honest effort to bury the hatchet and ignore the example of the criminal rich in Winnipeg.⁷⁷

⁷⁵Edmonton Bulletin, May 27, 1919.

⁷⁶Edmonton Free Press, June 28, 1919.

⁷⁷Searchlight, June 23, 1920.

The Alberta government could have intervened in Edmonton's sympathetic strike if it so chose. As a leader of a government besieged by an ascendant U.F.A., however, Premier Stewart opted for the safe course of verbal sabre-rattling from the lofty heights of his governmental offices:

Should it be necessary for the protection of property and the health and convenience of the community...action will be taken to the utmost extent of the powers of the province to see that every man, woman and child receives the protection which it is the duty of the government to afford. 78

There was, however, no real threat to property or the health of the community, and one possible source of violence, conflict between the returning veterans and the strikers, was avoided when a meeting of Edmonton Great War Veterans decided to maintain an attitude of "strict neutrality".⁷⁹ The only police action deemed necessary was by the R.N.W.M.P. who raided the Labor Hall early in the morning of July 1 searching for "literature, correspondence and any evidence that might tend to give information in respect to the alleged revolution claimed to have been planned to take place in Canada..."⁸⁰ in the summer of 1919. Regardless of any information obtained from the homes of Carl Berg, Joe Knight, and John F. McGuire which were raided the same evening, the Mounties achieved little at Labor Hall as the Edmonton strike

⁷⁸Edmonton Bulletin, May 27, 1919.

⁷⁹Edmonton Bulletin, May 30, 1919.

⁸⁰Edmonton Free Press, July 5, 1919.

committee had already vacated these premises and officials of the E.T. & L.C. had re-occupied their offices.⁸¹

In retrospect, the Edmonton sympathetic strike gained its significance only because it represented the reverse side of the coin to the Winnipeg General Strike. The Winnipeg strike was a classical political and social phenomenon in the history of the Canadian West. It occurred in a key metropolis of western Canada, and its repercussions profoundly influenced the political and economic aspirations of organized labor in Canada. The Edmonton strike occurred in a conservative, agrarian milieu, and it was of limited scope and duration because, in part, of the hold "international" craft unionism had upon the local labor movement. Considering the subsequent political and social history of Alberta, a history which contrasts sharply with the manifestations of radicalism that emerged in other western provinces, the insignificance of the Edmonton general strike in relationship with that of Winnipeg, should cause little surprise.

⁸¹ Ibid.

PART TWO

NEWSPAPER INTERPRETATION OF LABOR

UNREST IN EDMONTON: 1918-1919

Chapter V

ANALYSIS OF EDMONTON NEWSPAPERS: THEIR OWNERSHIP AND POLITICAL BIASES

The Edmonton Bulletin

Newspaper coverage of labor unrest during the 1918-1919 period must be evaluated in relationship to the editorial policies of their owners. The Edmonton Bulletin was very much the creature of Frank Oliver, journalist and politician.

Oliver, Liberal M.P. representing Edmonton and district from 1896 until December, 1917, naturally imposed a partisan Liberal bias upon his paper. As his political career absorbed most of his energies, he delegated financial decision-making to the Bulletin Co. (Ltd.) as of 1898. However, his control over the paper's editorial policy persisted until 1923, when he terminated his connections with the publication.¹ During the 1918-1919 period, it is manifestly apparent that the Bulletin retained much of the partisan Liberalism of its earlier years.

The December, 1917 election was undoubtedly a gal-
ling experience for the Liberal politician. He was one of
the few "Laurier loyalist" parliamentarians in western Can-
ada and rejected the prospect of collaborating with Borden's
Conservatives in the Unionist coalition. He believed cons-

¹W. S. Waddell, "Frank Oliver and the Bulletin",
Alberta Historical Review, Vol. V, No. 1 (Sept., 1957),
pp. 7-12.

cription to be infeasible and, essentially, reflected the official Liberal position regarding conscription during the 1917 debates over the issue. The Bulletin did, however, reflect the fact that, for electioneering purposes, Oliver wavered somewhat from the strict Laurier position without repudiating the Party's chieftain over the contentious subject. The Wartime Elections Act was most distasteful to him and this distaste was probably greatly exacerbated by the fact that it definitely contributed to his defeat in 1917 to the Unionist candidate, Brig. Gen. W. A. Griesbach, in the federal constituency of Edmonton West.

On the basis of the "home vote", Oliver won the election of 1917 by a slim margin of eighty votes.² The soldiers' vote gave Griesbach his victory. Machinations by Unionist electoral officials within the constituency may have further contributed to Oliver's defeat. The extent of these machinations can only be speculated upon; it is difficult to synthesize an accurate picture from the rival accounts of the election in the two competing Edmonton dailies. The Bulletin, in its coverage of an address by A. G. MacKay, a Liberal politician, reiterated many of its previous charges:

[MacKay] described the disenfranchisement of voters in the Falher district, where no poll was established because it was believed they would vote for Mr. Oliver and there the electors were compelled to cut their way through the bush for 30 miles in order

²Edmonton Journal, January 29, 1918.

to vote at a poll which had been established at a remote railway pump house. 3

In spite of Oliver's vigorous partisanship, it is unlikely he would deliberately fabricate those cases of election chicanery he documented in a petition to the Supreme Court, which, had he done so, would have rendered himself and witnesses susceptible to judicial scrutiny.⁴

The relationship between the Unionist regime and Oliver's Bulletin is an important consideration when newspaper coverage of the labor unrest of 1918-1919 is evaluated. To lay the blame for this unrest at the feet of the federal government was a natural course for the paper to follow, and this indeed transpired until the period of the Edmonton sympathetic strike in May, 1919. During the 1919 labor upheaval, the free-enterprising Bulletin rather suddenly succumbed to the "red scare" of post-war Canada and reacted very strongly against the more tumultuous aspects of the O.B.U. secessionist movement as well as to the sympathetic strike. However, the stance assumed by the Bulletin was not any more hostile to various aspects of militant unionism than that assumed by the "Loyalists" within the Edmonton Trades and Labor Council as reflected by the Edmonton Free Press. One such "Loyalist", Elmer Roper, has adjudged the Bulletin's position as being critical of the strike "but not

³"How Election Was Stolen By Unionists", Edmonton Bulletin, January 9, 1918.

⁴"Oliver Protests the Election of Genl. Griesbach", Edmonton Journal, January 29, 1918.

violently so."⁵

An important factor in determining the Bulletin's stance vis-à-vis organized labor was the fact that as of May, 1917, Elmer Roper was an employee of the paper and had a good opportunity to influence the type of labor news being published in the daily. Roper apprenticed as a printer in Calgary when he was fourteen years old. He became a member of the Printing Pressmen's Union in 1911, and subsequently became prominent in the Calgary Trades and Labor Council. When, in 1917, the Bulletin secured a press from the Calgary Herald, Roper arrived in Edmonton to serve as press foreman for Oliver's publication.⁶

Each Saturday, the Edmonton Bulletin published a labor column, "In the World of Labor". Roper assembled information for this column, receiving no remuneration for his labor reporting.⁷ The Edmonton trade union establishment hence had its viewpoint propagated by a staunch "loyalist", and the Edmonton Bulletin maintained a fairly good relationship with organized labor. This relationship was desirable, for the trade unions had a certain influence on the circulation of the Bulletin. The circulation battles between the Journal and Bulletin were prolonged and bitter; during the 1918-1919 period the war for readership was definitely going

⁵Elmer E. Roper, Letter to William Askin, November 9, 1972.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid.

against Oliver's morning daily, and in favor of its afternoon rival. This is evidenced by the circulation analysis contained in Appendix #5.

The Edmonton Journal

The Edmonton Journal was established in November, 1903, by three entrepreneurs from Portage la Prairie -- John Macpherson, John W. Cunningham, and Arther Moore.⁸ It was a Conservative Party organ, and remained so after its acquisition by Southam Limited in January, 1912.⁹ Shareholders in the Journal also included J. V. Woods, Charles Magrath, and W. A. Griesbach.¹⁰ To the extent that partisan politicians such as Griesbach -- the nemesis of Frank Oliver in 1917 -- were involved in the Journal, the paper adopted a partisan political stance. To the extent that the paper was a property of the Southam chain, it was expected to be a money-making business and hence could not afford to alienate large sectors of the public in Edmonton and district.

The Journal, as part of a national chain, was able to withstand fluctuations in circulation and advertising revenue. It was also able to provide better national and international news coverage than its independent rival, the Bulletin. While, prior to 1912 it was on a precarious fin-

⁸Charles Bruce, News and the Southams (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1968), p. 135.

⁹Ibid., pp. 134-137.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 137.

ancial footing, after its acquisition it never lost money for the Southams. As the paper destined to ultimately rule supreme in a single-newspaper city (the Bulletin folded in 1951), it, even in the 1918-1919 period exhibited those characteristics which are possessed by the modern mass-circulation daily. Such characteristics include:

- (a) a tendency to please as many and to offend as few readers as possible;
- (b) a tendency to cater to the "prevailing wisdom" and popular prejudice within a certain region;
- (c) a tendency to reinforce the political and economic status-quo without appearing illiberal or reactionary; and
- (d) a position of ostensible "objectivity" in news stories, and a willingness to allow a fairly broad spectrum of opinion to be published in signed columns and letters-to-the-editor sections.¹¹

While the above characteristics perhaps pertain to the contemporary Journal more than to the publication during the 1918-1919 period, the publication was very definitely departing from a position of militant conservatism at that time. While it catered to Edmonton's business community, it

¹¹This list of attributes, by no means complete, relies heavily upon W. H. Kesterton, A History of Journalism in Canada, Carleton Library No. 36 (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1967). See Chapter 6, "Qualitative Developments: How the Daily Newspaper Changed During the Twentieth Century", p. 118 ff.

took great pains to elicit readership from the salaried, wage-earning, and agrarian sectors of the population. A fairly lengthy farm section was designed to attract the support of the farmers. The trade unionist readership, while tending to be more attracted to the Bulletin, was not ignored by the Journal. In 1919, a feature involving news and comment about labor was introduced into the paper. This feature was entitled "Trades Unions and Labor." Conducting the column was Rev. F. E. Mercer, an Edmonton clergyman sympathetic to the aspirations of organized labor.

It is not being suggested that the Journal was, in any way, apolitical in 1918-1919. It editorially supported the Unionist government very staunchly, and intimated often that the Honorable Frank Oliver was a poor loser when he protested the election of W. A. Griesbach to Parliament in December, 1917. Hence, when Oliver petitioned the Supreme Court regarding the election in Edmonton West, the Journal headlined the event with the headings, "Voluminous Petition Covers 42 Charges, Some Being Most Trivial" and "Laurier Candidate in West Edmonton Asks for the Unseating of Soldier."¹² Such a political stance would not adversely affect the circulation of the Journal. The white Anglo-Celtic component of the public in Edmonton and district supported the war effort on the whole, and Borden's Military Service Act and Wartime Elections Act did not have that much adverse

¹²Edmonton Journal, January 29, 1918.

effect on this sector of the population which had already extended so much material contribution to the war effort. On the other hand, Frank Oliver's stance regarding conscription could not elicit too much tangible gratitude from those persons who would appreciate such a position. Many Germanic and other central European immigrants were disenfranchised by the Wartime Elections Act. At the same time, their linguistic situation would prevent them from rewarding Oliver for his unpopular stance by purchasing his paper. Therefore, Oliver, who hitherto used the Bulletin to such good effect to enhance his political career, weakened the Bulletin when his parliamentary career ended in a storm of controversy. The Journal benefited from all this; its Unionist bias merely pandered to the prevailing opinion in the Edmonton milieu, and was no long-range deterrent to its circulation.

The socio-economic interests to which the Journal catered -- the urban businessmen and rural farmers (sharing to a considerable degree common petit bourgeois values) as well as the ethnic, social, and economic establishments of northern Alberta -- comprised that fraction of the population which had the time and education to read daily newspapers thoroughly and regularly. This readership was not only able to subscribe to the Journal on a steady basis, but also could sustain the publication by purchasing advertising space.

The Journal sought to maintain a thriving business climate in Edmonton -- its revenues depended largely upon

this -- and hence was interested in deterring any manifestations of widespread labor unrest during the 1919 period. Therefore, the paper opted to land "responsible" leaders of the trade union movement -- on the whole, upholders of international craft unionism -- and to condemn those "radicals" and "secessionists" who became so visible in 1919. The Journal evidently sought to influence the direction which organized labor took in 1919 by commenting favorably about manifestations of "labor statesmanship" and combatting manifestations of radicalism. The latter was accomplished as much by omission as by commission; the Journal often underemphasized or ignored the activities of "radicals" and "secessionists" and this was as an effective means of combatting labor unrest as was any overt attack against "radicalism". Thus, the trade union establishment benefitted from the Journal's position and was able to have its views reinforced in its pages. This deliberate policy on the part of the paper to influence the course of labor union developments in 1919 can be contrasted to the reflexive actions of the Bulletin which tended to react, often in a sensational manner, to the actions of organized labor.

The man who epitomized "pure and simple trades unionism" and had a vested interest in maintaining the ascendancy of "international" craft unionism in Canada, Samuel Gompers, addressed a joint session of the Senate and House of Commons on Friday, April 26, 1918. The Journal

went on to praise Mr. Gompers in an editorial, "The Honor of Samuel Gompers":

On Friday the guest [at a joint meeting of the Senate and the Commons] was Mr. Samuel Gompers, president of the American Federation of Labor....

We have all along been too well aware what elements there were in the ranks of organized labor as elsewhere, which consciously or unconsciously, were very ready to do Germany's work. Mr. Gompers has fought them at every stage with a courage and an ability which is beyond all praise. He has won respect all along the line and each day his authority and prestige becomes greater. 13

This editorial reflected the basic position of the Journal vis-à-vis organized labor. The trade union establishment, as represented by Gompers, was praiseworthy. Those whom Mr. Gompers and the American Federation of Labor attacked in the labor movement during and after the war, represented disloyal and seditious elements, willing to undermine the political and economic underpinnings of the nation.

The labor unrest encountered in Edmonton and district in 1918 and 1919 was to receive considerable attention from both Edmonton dailies. The Bulletin, anti-Unionist and reflecting the populist liberalism of its founder, the Hon. Frank Oliver, could be expected to identify with the forces of protest and dissent which emerged during those years. This likelihood was realized to a degree. As long as this unrest was sporadic and remote from the Edmonton scene, the Bulletin sympathized with the striker and inveighed against those nebulous "combines" and "profiteers" who were purport-

¹³Edmonton Journal, April 29, 1918, p. 4.

edly the cause of his protest. However, the liberalism of the Bulletin could not transcend the fundamental capitalist underpinnings of North American society. Once those underpinnings seemed threatened, once the forces of dissent seemed to threaten the established order, and once the possibility of massive unrest impinged upon the parochial serenity of the Bulletin editorial staff, the paper suddenly veered from a Unionist-baiting attitude to one of Red-baiting. This vacillation of the daily, accented by its sensational style and unabashed partisanship, is in marked contrast to the essential consistency of the Journal. The latter publication supported organized labor to the extent to which its establishment was willing and able to contain forces of militancy and radicalism within labor ranks. As the Journal reflected the interests of Canada's political and Edmonton's socio-economic establishment, it actively supported attempts by the trade union establishment to contain industrial unrest and hence to maintain economic stability.

Chapter VI

LABOR UNREST IN 1918 AS VIEWED BY EDMONTON NEWSPAPERS

Newspaper Coverage of Trade Union Organization

While labor unrest in 1918 was extensive, and was the harbinger of the massive industrial disruptions of 1919, little indication was to be found in the Edmonton newspapers early in the year that all was not happy in the ranks of organized labor. The Alberta Federation of Labor, holding its annual convention at Lethbridge as of January 7, 1918, received coverage in the Journal and the Bulletin which, while not extensive, tended to be objective. The rather small coverage given to the convention of the Journal on January 7 and January 9, 1918, stressed the decision of the A.F. of L. to promote "a working-class party" within Alberta and the re-election of J. A. Kinney as President of the Federation.¹ The Bulletin stressed the same things, giving additional emphasis to the fact that the U.F.A. was barred from affiliation to the labor body, "...the ground being taken that farmers had different problems from the wage-earner and therefore had nothing in common."² Perhaps the Liberal Bulletin saw fit to emphasize the inability of the A.F. of L. to strengthen links with the provincial farm body as the Liberal government in Edmonton could hardly benefit

¹Edmonton Journal, January 7 and 9, 1918.

²Edmonton Journal, January 8, 1918.

from such an alliance and, indeed as of 1921 when a measure of electoral agreement had been achieved by organized labor and the U.F.A., the apprehensions of partisan Liberals were certainly realized.

As the content of the articles in the Journal on January 9 and the Bulletin on January 10, summing up the decisions of the A.F. of L. convention, were similar, it can be assumed that both papers relied on the same press services for their information. Most decisions were of a legislative nature; they involved specific objectives which labor desired from municipal and provincial governments in Alberta. A measure of concern about the employment problems of returning soldiers was indicated in A.F. of L. resolutions. The concerns of the A.F. of L. regarding provincial labor legislation were reflected in the activities of the E.T. & L.C. early in 1918. Hence, on January 22, the Journal, reporting on the regular meeting of the Council on January 21, 1918, stated that the labor body "...went on record in support of the action taken by the Alberta Federation of Labor that there should be no amendments to the Factory Act until it had been given a trial."³ The fact that some of the railway shops in Edmonton were seemingly ignoring the act was duly reported in the Journal. Similar coverage of this meeting occurred in the Bulletin on January 22.

Besides its function of influencing labor legislat-

³Edmonton Journal, January 22, 1919.

ion, the E.T. & L.C.'s efforts to organize new locals received the attention of the press. Hence, at its meeting of March 19, organizational questions were reported to have absorbed the delegates' attention. The Journal introduced its coverage of this meeting with the major headline, "Diffidence Is Big Handicap of Organized Labor", followed by the minor headline, "Activities Extended and New Unions in Process of Formation."⁴ That this was a misleading headline was demonstrated by the article which revealed that the "diffidence" of trade unionists had to do with their failure to get on the civic voters' lists; there was no "diffidence" on the part of E.T. & L.C. officials who planned to organize retail clerks, laundresses, factory workers and clerical help in the period ahead. The Bulletin coverage of the same meeting accented the election of officers for 1918 and the request made to the Council by the G.W.V.A. asking for greater liaison between the two organizations.⁵

Dissimilarity of reporting on the activities of the Trades Council was accented when a local of the Federal Workers' Union of Canada had been organized for Edmonton. This local, according to the Bulletin, was to take in "...all classes of labor not at present organized...irrespective of race, creed, or sex." The Journal on the same day wrote an article headlined, "Enlist Chinese In Provincial Labor

⁴Edmonton Journal, March 19, 1918.

⁵Edmonton Bulletin, March 19, 1918.

Movement -- All Celestial Workers to Be Affiliated With New Organization,"⁶ The latter paper revealed that the Chinese were to be organized in a local of their own, affiliated to the F.W.U., in a manner similar to that attempted in Calgary. This report was followed by a second which indicated that the "...Oriental workingmen did not take kindly to the idea, preferring to keep to the societies and clubs they already had formed among themselves."⁷ It would appear that the Journal chose to concentrate on a narrow aspect of the F.W.U.'s organizational campaign in Edmonton -- its attempt to recruit Chinese workers -- in spite of the fact that a fairly large local of the union, consisting initially of forty members, was formed.⁸

Several union locals comprising civic employees experienced friction with the City of Edmonton in 1918. In one instance, strike action ensued. In two other cases, the bad feelings resulting from this friction probably was an important factor explaining their strike action in 1919. The streetrailwaymen were never to enjoy peace with the utilities committee of the City Council after their strike of 1917. The City had hired strikebreakers in that year, and many of these scabs were working on the street railway in 1918. The unsettled conditions among street railway employ-

⁶Edmonton Journal, March 27, 1918.

⁷Edmonton Journal, April 16, 1918.

⁸Edmonton Bulletin, March 19, 1918.

ees necessitated the drafting of "...a by-law to cover conditions of employment on the street railway."⁹ In order to give the union viewpoint about the contents of the by-law, the street railway employees elected a six-man committee to meet with the unilities committee. At this meeting on February 6, 1918, a second committee of employees, comprising "new men", the strike-breakers of 1917, also arrived. Both Edmonton dailies seized upon this division in the ranks of the streetrailwaymen to cast aspersions on the validity of the official "union committee". The Bulletin headlined its coverage of the meeting with "Old and New Men of the Street Railway Department Fight for Representation."¹⁰ The Journal also accented this division in the ranks of the workers, a division which explains the mendicant position of the union in 1918 which prevented it from asking for any substantial wage increases:

H. K. Montgomery, chairman of the "union committee", said that in view of the statement of the city's financial condition, they were agreed that no increase of wages be considered.

It was pointed out that...there was some adjustment required of the wages paid flagmen and watchmen. 11

The street railway continued to dominate a considerable portion of local labor news during 1918, a chief question at issue being the relative position on the seniority list of

⁹Edmonton Bulletin, February 7, 1918.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Edmonton Journal, February 7, 1918.

"old employees", "new employees", and returned soldiers granted leaves-of-absence from the street railway during their periods of military service.

A second source of friction between the City and unionized employees occurred within the ranks of the firemen. During 1917, considerable animosity was engendered between the firemen and the Edmonton city council when the former fought for the recognition of their union and the securing of an agreement over working conditions. One of the provisos of the settlement finally reached, was that "seniority should have due consideration in promotions." This provision was only reluctantly agreed to by the firemen as they wanted seniority to be the sole basis for promotion. The question of promotion reached critical proportions when Fire Chief Henderson resigned in December, 1917. On December 27, the city commissioners and Mayor Evans appointed a Mr. R. G. Davidson as fire chief.¹² The appointee was not only not appointed from the ranks of Edmonton's firemen, he was residing in Chicago at the time of the appointment. After stewing over this appointment during January, 1918, the fire brigade struck on February 1, 1918.¹³ Resulting from this, a labor dispute arose in Edmonton which, while not of significance in the larger context of western Canadian labor history, was sufficient to divide the citizens of Edmonton

¹²"The Story of the Strike", Edmonton Bulletin, March 1, 1918.

¹³Edmonton Bulletin, February 2, 1918.

into two camps during the month of February and was only resolved by a plebiscite in March, 1918. The issue probably occupied more newspaper space in Edmonton than any other local event in 1918, and gave the two dailies ample opportunity for editorial battles. It is thus a fitting dispute for in-depth analysis.

The Journal of February 1, 1918, described the installation of Davidson as new chief by acting-Mayor W. H. Martin and Commissioner Harrison. At this point, the firemen struck and established strike headquarters at Labor Hall. While the Journal made some effort to indicate the firemen's side of the dispute, there can be no doubt that the paper favored the action of City Council right from the start. Hence, it reported on February 2 the view of the acting-Mayor that "due consideration" was given promotion of an Edmonton fireman prior to the hiring of Davidson.¹⁴ On February 4, a statement from W. H. Martin was publicized indicating that "...on January 30 the firemen sent in an ultimatum demanding the appointment of one of their own men and positively stating they would serve under no other."

While the Journal tended to be pro-administration, the Bulletin was solidly pro-firemen. While the firemen's strike involved a fundamental question of collective bargaining, and in some ways the Bulletin was no more pro-labor than was the Journal, the firemen represented a popular

¹⁴Edmonton Journal, February 2, 1918.

issue that could aid its circulation problems. The firemen were involved in a dangerous occupation that involved a certain amount of glamour. Hence, when the Bulletin reported that "Seventy-Seven Men Doffed Their Uniforms Yesterday Afternoon," it indicated the extent to which the public supported the strikers' stand:

They [the strikers] are confident that they have the support of the public in the move that they have taken. As they walked along Jasper Avenue they were told by many passers-by to "stay with it." 15

The Bulletin stressed during the whole dispute that the Edmonton fire brigade was efficient and that strike-breakers appointed by Chief Davidson were not. The fundamental question of seniority being the basis for promotion was replaced by the more bourgeois concept of "efficiency." This was accented by a Bulletin editorial on February 2, 1918:

If we don't need a fire brigade we should not have to pay for one. But we do need a brigade very urgently and we need efficiency. We had efficiency. It may be a very long time before we have equal efficiency. And many things may happen in the interval. 16

This editorial was augmented by intimations that serious fires would break out which would not be competently subdued by the strikebreaking fire brigade. Insurance rates would go up. To drive home the latter contention, the visit to

¹⁵Edmonton Bulletin, February 2, 1918.

¹⁶"The Fire Situation", Edmonton Bulletin, February 2, 1918.

Edmonton on February 3 by R. G. Creighton, Alberta representative of the Western Canadian Association of Fire Underwriters, was stressed. Accompanying this report was a vague reference to "many people" who were "inclined to think that the organization of a new department [would] mean an increase in the [fire insurance] rates."¹⁷

The contention that the "new" fire brigade would prove inadequate in face of an emergency proved to be a self-fulfilling prophecy. On Sunday, February 24, the New Maryland Hotel, along with adjacent businesses, was gutted by fire. The estimated damage was \$260,000 which was only partially covered by insurance.

The fire, which is the most disastrous...for many years, will be made the subject of a searching investigation, both as to its cause and as to the efficiency displayed in its handling by Chief Davidson and the brigade which has been organized to replace the city's fire fighting force which went on strike two weeks ago. ¹⁸

Accompanying the large, front page story, was a tally of fire damage in Edmonton since February 19, 1918. The total damage was estimated to be \$240,000.¹⁹ Next to the feature article was a statement from Mayor H. M. E. Evans that

¹⁷Edmonton Bulletin, February 2, 1918.

¹⁸Edmonton Bulletin, February 25, 1918.

¹⁹This included the fire damage to the New Maryland Hotel, a "conservative" estimate being \$220,000. As can be seen by the two estimates on the same page, consistency was not always a virtue of the Bulletin. It was the \$260,000 figure which was part of a headline, set with 3/4" type, at the top of the edition.

striking firemen, watching the blaze, were asked to help but practised "something less than good citizenship" by replying that "they would help if [the Mayor] would call off the new force and put ex-Chief Henderson in charge." Several striking firemen, and ex-Chief W. G. Henderson, had statements published rebutting Evans' allegations.²⁰ The effect of this group of charges and counter-charges was to create the impression that the mayor impeded the fire-fighting by ignoring the services of experienced firemen.

The Bulletin was a major factor in influencing public opinion against the decision of City Council to hire Davidson. This was of considerable importance when the labor unrest of 1919 is considered. The Council was made up almost entirely of businessmen or professionals, such as the lawyer C. H. Grant, who possessed a business ethos. The trade unionist J. A. Kinney had to elicit support from businessmen of City Council in order to exact concessions for labor. On February 12, 1918, a resolution was introduced in Council to cancel the appointment of Davidson. Supporting the resolution were Aldermen C. H. Grant, J. A. Kinney, H. Milton Martin and S. J. McCoppen.²¹ All but Kinney, were up for re-election in December, 1918. While their resolution was defeated by a vote of 5 to 4, they were on the winning

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Edmonton Bulletin, February 13, 1918.

side of an issue which would have an important hearing on the December 9 vote. Significantly, H. W. Martin (not to be confused with H. Milton Martin who devoted considerable effort in December, 1918, to make sure that the electorate would not be so confused) was defeated on December 9. So was C. P. Wilson, Joseph Clarke's sole mayoralty opponent.²² Both were aldermen who voted in favor of retaining the U.S. import as Fire Chief. This was impolitic when it is considered that a petition containing 10,878 names was presented to the Council by Alfred Farmilo on February 12 asking that a Fire Chief be selected from among the firefighting ranks.²³ Prior to the December election, those aldermen who had backed the striking firemen capitalized upon this fact at public election forums. So did J. A. Clarke, who was very vocal in his support of the firemen during February when mass meetings were held to endorse the action of the strikers.²⁴ The outcome of the firemen's dispute, and that of the December elections, had a salutary effect on aldermen who had to cope with the labor unrest of 1919 and had their eye upon re-election in December 1919.

The Edmonton Journal not only endorsed the appointment of Davidson, but actively aided the civic administration

²²Edmonton Journal, December 10, 1918.

²³Edmonton Bulletin, February 13, 1918.

²⁴See the Edmonton Journal, February 18, 1919, for coverage of such a mass meeting at Norwood Methodist Church on Saturday, February 16, 1918.

in its recruitment of a strikebreaking fire brigade. This was done by impressing upon "public-spirited" citizens the need to volunteer for service in the "new" brigade in order to save the lives and property of Edmontonians. On February 4, the paper published a statement by acting-Mayor W. H. Martin and continued to publish statements from time to time emanating from the supporters of the appointment of Davidson. On February 9 the Journal published on page one a letter sent to the "morning paper" by Mayor Evans but which was obviously concocted for the benefit of the "afternoon paper". When Wm. G. Murray and Hugh C. Mackay of the Firemen's Association wrote a letter to the Bulletin, the original letter and Mayor Evans' rebuttal were published in the Journal.²⁵ The paper avoided the belligerent tone of its competitor when it editorialized on the dispute. It exuded "sweet reason", for was not the civic administration acting in a manifestly reasonable manner? A typical editorial, of February 11, did "...not deny the justice of the principle of promotion through service", but nevertheless maintained that no "...principle of law or justice [was] violated through the appointment of Chief Davidson." The Journal professed to be not hostile to organized labor and was not prejudiced by the fact that the firemen's action had been endorsed by many trade unions.²⁶

²⁵Edmonton Journal, February 12, 1918.

²⁶Edmonton Journal, February 11, 1918.

The E.T. & L.C. leadership latched on to the firemen's dispute as a means of accomplishing several goals simultaneously. The contractual status of civic employees and their unions, already alluded to in the case of the streetrailwaymen, was a pressing problem in 1918. With the question of the employment of returning soldiers growing more acute, it was necessary to ensure job security for civic employees, seniority being the basis for such security. The strike of the streetrailwaymen in 1917 demonstrated the need for agreements with the city which would ensure union recognition and the right to use the strike weapon with a measure of protection against strikebreaking. The 1917 strike weakened the credibility of the E.T. & L.C. leadership when many strikers accused them of rendering insufficient support on that occasion. Just as the E.T. & L.C. executive could not afford to sacrifice the firefighters and further reduce their credibility, neither could they resist the opportunity to capitalize on a strike that had massive public support. Furthermore, the Labor Representation League, which was in the process of metamorphosing into the Edmonton branch of the Dominion Labor Party, undoubtedly possessed tacticians who realized the political potential of the Firemen's strike. By the time of the December election, the D.L.P. was in a position to field such candidates as A. Farmilo and J. W. Findlay.²⁷ The laborites desired a greater

²⁷Edmonton Journal, November 23, 1918.

presence in civic politics, not only to give organized labor greater influence at City Hall, but also as a means of weakening the influence of socialists such as Joe Knight. Practical politics was a further factor determining the zeal with which the E.T. & L.C. intervened in the firemen's dispute.

One clear indicator of organized labor's attempts to reverse the decision of City Council was the prominence of Alfred Farmilo and J. Findlay, President of the E.T. & L.C., at mass meetings organized to protest Council's actions. Another was the large number of letters published in the Journal and Bulletin from Edmonton union locals. As a result of organized pressure from labor and its allies, City Council on February 23 resolved by a vote of 8 - 1 to put the question to a plebiscite.²⁸ The ballot for the plebiscite asked, "Do you support the stand taken by the city council with respect to the fire department?". A footnote at the bottom of the ballot paper explained that a "Yes" vote would represent a vote of confidence in City Council and would lead to a termination of the firefighters' strike, whereas a "No" vote would lead to the re-employment of all members of the striking brigade and that a chief would be hired from their ranks.²⁹

The days preceding the March 4, 1918 plebiscite saw

²⁸ Edmonton Bulletin, February 25, 1918.

²⁹ Edmonton Journal, February 27, 1918.

a massive campaign by both organized labor and those business interests (represented on City Council by Mathew Esdale, George Pheasey, H. W. Martin, and C. Wilson) who supported the hiring of Davidson. A "Citizens' Plebiscite Committee" emerged which, while spending heavily on advertising urging a "yes" vote for the plebiscite, neglected to indicate its membership or sources of financial support. A typical advertisement read:

Agitators' False Statement

It is Not a Fight Against Trade Unionism
The Agitators Say It Is and It Is Absolutely False

Vote "Yes"

Citizens' Plebiscite Committee³⁰

Pejorative labelling -- the "name calling" propaganda device -- was featured in the Committee's advertisements. Labels such as "agitators", "false", "principle violated", etc. taxed the lexicon of the "citizens". The "band wagon" propaganda device was emphasized in the advertising of the E. T. & L.C. and its affiliates. One advertisement read:

The Day Is Won

- | | | |
|---------|----|--|
| Because | 1. | The Old Brigade is the most efficient fire-fighting organization in Canada. |
| Because | 2. | The fair-minded people of Edmonton will not stand for secret sessions, determining public policies, being held at City Hall. |
| Because | 3. | Right IS Might and no matter how many strings or bluffs are pulled the TRUTH must be known and Right must prevail. |

³⁰Edmonton Bulletin, March 2, 1918.

- Because 4. The protection of lives or property cannot be trusted to green and incompetent men when Edmonton's boast for the past years has been its efficient brigade and we must have their experienced protection.
- Because 5. A campaign of calumny cannot conceal the facts of the case.
- Because 6. Oh! What's the use of further argument? Your answer must be shown by your ballot Monday.
- Their last Hope Is Gone -- The Injunction Has Been Refused

BE SURE AND VOTE "NO"³¹

The two Edmonton dailies were quite partisan in their opposite stances regarding the strike. The Bulletin certainly spared no effort to unseat Davidson and simultaneously to score a victory over the Journal. Hence, Oliver's paper devoted massive amounts of editorial space to promote a large "No" vote on March 4. One editorial maintained:

...[I]nstead of taking reasonable means to secure ... [fire] protection the mayor and council majority through their "Citizens' Plebiscite Committee" are attempting to support their case before the citizens by the grossest misrepresentation and misstatements directed against the most faithful and efficient employees the city ever had. 32

Editorials were but one device used by the Bulletin to persuade the public. In its "letters to the editor" columns, the number of letters published favoring the strikers greatly exceeded those opposing their position. The following analysis reveals the type of letter published from February

³¹Edmonton Bulletin, March 4, 1918.

³²Edmonton Bulletin, March 2, 1918.

2 until March 7, 1918.

<u>Letters In Favor Of Strikers*</u>	<u>"Neutral"***</u>	<u>Against Strikers***</u>	<u>Totals</u>
14	3	5	22
<u>Letters In Favor Of "No" Vote</u>	<u>"Neutral"</u>	<u>Vote "Yes"</u>	
12	1	3	16
<u>26</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>38</u>

* Includes letters from union locals such as Lodge #10 of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Engineers, Robert McCreath of the E.T. & L.C., etc.

** One "Neutral" letter is from Mayor H. M. E. Evans while another criticizes the efficiency of the "new brigade".

*** Includes letters from Mayor H. M. Evans and Ald. W. H. Martin as well as from the Board of Trade.

(As some of the letters sent to the Bulletin were incorporated in news stories and hence are not legitimately "letters to the editor", the count may be disputed as to exactitude, but not as to its validity as an indicator of public support and Bulletin bias.)

The Journal was more restrained in its editorial comment. As public opinion apparently favored the "old brigade", too belligerent an attitude would be detrimental to circulation. At the same time, those businessmen comprising the Citizens' Plebiscite Committee had the finances to buy their own advertising, and a plethora of "Vote Yes" advertisements cluttered the Journal until the plebiscite vote had transpired. A long, but equivocating, editorial on

February 25 supported vaguely the City Council position while, on March 1, a much more specific advocacy of a "Vote Yes" position was given.

Letters about the strike and plebiscite were few in the Journal, either as a result of a willful reluctance to publish such letters, or due to an aversion on the part of the public to use the pages of the paper as a forum. Six letters favoring the strike were all mailed by union locals. Two opposing the firemen consisted of a letter from acting-Mayor W. H. Martin and one from a strikebreaker. The majority of the City Council, including the mayor, had its viewpoint propagated in the form of "statements to the press" incorporated as articles. Regarding the plebiscite, the Journal published side-by-side, "Two Opinions on Plebiscite" on February 28, one letter being written by James Ramsay, M.L.A., who intended to vote "Yes", and the other by Alex Livingston who intended to vote "No". This one exercise in "objectivity" was about the only opportunity for the public to use the Journal as a forum. R. G. Stewart of the Ministerial Association was able to have a letter published stating that the Association was "neutral" even though individual clergymen were entitled to express their own views. Both factions in the controversy were naturally anxious to show that "God was on their side", and Rev. Stewart felt it necessary to disabuse the public of any notion that Divine Truth was supporting either City Council or the firemen.

The vote plurality favoring the striking firemen on

March 4 was remarkable. Of 8,789 votes cast, 6,539 were "No" votes and 2,250 were "yes".³³ On March 6, 1918, the "old" brigade resumed their work with R. Davis, veteran employee of the Edmonton fire brigade, assuming the office of Fire Chief. All members of the "new" brigade, and ex-Chief Davidson, were discharged from their positions the same day.³⁴ Organized labor was jubilant at the outcome and votes of appreciation extended to the Bulletin were promptly published in that paper:

To The Edmonton Bulletin:

At a large and enthusiastic meeting held tonight in the Trades and Labor Hall, a general vote of thanks to the Bulletin for its loyal support to the cause of the firemen was passed by an unanimous vote.

(signed) J. A. Kinney, Chairman.

Edmonton, March 4th, 1918.

To Hon. Frank Oliver:

Sir; -- The members of the old fire brigade wish to tender you their sincerest gratitude for your splendid support during our hard fight for our rights.

Coming from a man who has held one of the highest offices in the Dominion, such support carries double weight.

We can assure you that your stand in this matter will never be forgotten by the old brigade.

Signed on behalf of the firemen,

Edmonton, March 4th, 1918.³⁵ W. G. Murray, President

The consequences of the 1918 firemens' strike were considerable as far as Edmonton's political and labor history were concerned. The credibility of a political strategy for

³³Edmonton Bulletin, March 5, 1918.

³⁴Edmonton Bulletin, March 7, 1918.

³⁵Edmonton Bulletin, March 5, 1918.

labor was enhanced, and the need for general strike action was reduced. Prior to the March 4, vote, spokesmen for organized labor intimated that they were willing and able to use the general strike weapon if this were necessary to assist the firemen.³⁶ These threats proved unnecessary, and the victory at the polls gave credence to the arguments of those who were pressing for greater involvement by labor in electoral politics. In the December, 1917 civic election, nearly one thousand fewer voted than during the March, 1918 plebiscite.³⁷ The plebiscite represented an issue which involved much interest on the part of the working-class voter in civic politics. In the working-class section of Edmonton, east of 101 Street and north of the Saskatchewan, the vote was overwhelmingly "No". Encouraged by their victory, the laborites under the aegis of the Dominion Labor Party fielded a large slate of aldermanic candidates in the December, 1918 election, and one of its nominees, J. J. McKenzie (South Side), was added to City Council to provide some backing for J. A. Kinney.³⁸

The political future of J. A. Clarke was bright. When running in the 1918 mayoralty contest, he received the official endorsement of the D.L.P.³⁹ This endorsement was

³⁶Edmonton Bulletin, March 2, 1918.

³⁷Edmonton Bulletin, March 5, 1918.

³⁸Edmonton Journal, December 10, 1918.

³⁹Edmonton Bulletin, December 3, 1918.

important, for Clarke was engaged in a two-way fight. In 1917, he was engaged in a five-way fight and, although he came in second, he trailed H. Evans by 2,196 votes (Evans getting 4,134 votes and Clarke 1,938).⁴⁰ His stance during the firemen's dispute secured sufficient support from the East End working-class vote to ensure his victory.⁴¹ The political impact of labor, while rewarding Clarke and aldermen who supported the firemen in 1918, at the same time may have rendered more cautious those businessmen who financially supported the Citizens' Plebiscite Committee. In 1919, during the Edmonton sympathetic strike, some of these businessmen were probably more hesitant to invest time and money in a citizens' committee when the plebiscite of 1918 was recalled.

It is likely that the firemen's strike determined the outcome of the attempt by members of the Civic Service Union, local 52, to secure a working agreement and a new salary schedule from City Council during July, 1918. While Toronto, Winnipeg, and Vancouver were threatened by strikes in their civil services, a fairly reasonable settlement was attained in Edmonton.⁴² The handling of this civic service was reported very objectively by the Bulletin, whereas the Journal was true-to-form in its coverage with its use of

⁴⁰Edmonton Bulletin, March 5, 1918.

⁴¹Edmonton Journal, December 10, 1918.

⁴²Edmonton Bulletin, July 20, 1918.

such headlines as "City Receives Ultimatum From Clerical Staff." Yet, the Journal proved to be surprisingly subdued in its coverage of the civic election of December, 1918, when labor's friend, Joseph Clarke, tackled Charles E. Wilson for the mayoralty post. The paper naturally supported Charles E. Wilson as he was the candidate of the business interests of Edmonton:

...Those who wish to see the city's business administered on sound lines within the next year should between now and election day spare no effort to secure Mr. Wilson's return. 43

The Journal was at least consistent. It positively supported Wilson, and left the "mud-slinging" to the Bulletin. The latter paper, ignoring its circulation battles for awhile, supported Wilson and also proceeded to launch a vigorous editorial campaign against Clarke. The Bulletin referred often to Clarke's activities in 1914-1915 when, as an alderman, he was chairman of the safety and health committee of City Council under Mayor McNamara. In several editorials the paper suggested that Clarke was "soft" on the prostitution question:

In regard to his aldermanic activities as chairman of the safety and health committee, which related to the repression, or encouragement, of crime and vice in the city, we have the report of an investigation by Mr. Justice Scott -- the result of several indignation meetings of citizens -- which has a much more direct bearing on Mr. Clarke's candidature for mayor of Edmonton than Mr. Congdon's opinion of his Yukon record. 44

⁴³Edmonton Journal, November, 23, 1918.

⁴⁴Edmonton Bulletin, December 6, 1918.

On December 9, the Bulletin in an editorial entitled "To Save or To Wreck", maintained that "[t]he men who think the city is worth saving and who want to save it are voting for Wilson." It is interesting that the combined support of the Bulletin and the Journal could not save Mr. Wilson's political career. While working-class voters voted heavily in favor of J. Clarke, the candidate received fairly healthy support from prosperous west Edmonton. Perhaps sufficient middle class voters, titilated by Clarke's handling of prostitutes and intrigued by his "Yukon record", ventured forth to vote for Clarke in order to see what Edmonton would be like with him as chief magistrate.

Other Manifestations of Labor Unrest in 1918

As much of the labor unrest in Edmonton and district involved locals whose strike action of necessity was co-ordinated with that of others on a regional or national basis, much of the labor unrest indicated in Edmonton's dailies was part of a wider pattern. This unrest centered in the coal-mining and railway industries. The first of these, the coal-mining industry, experienced unrest throughout most of the war (see Chapter II). In January, 1918, comments were being made about the desirability of conscripting "alien enemy labor" (i.e., Canadians who had the ill-fortune to emigrate from Central Europe prior to World War I, and were disenfranchised because of the Wartime Elections Act, were logical choices for "conscription" into the work

force at wages somewhat less than enviable). The need for such "conscription" was revealed by the Journal which editorialized about the "higher wages" being paid to miners at Drumheller, many of these being from Central Europe (and categorized by the Southam paper as being "Germans" and "Austrians"). On the basis of an "in-depth" Journal examination (the interviewing of one mine manager at Drumheller), the paper revealed that the average daily wage was \$9.73, and during December, 1917, the entrepreneur being interviewed "believed" that the average at his mine was \$13.00 per day.

If these figures are correct, the proposal to conscript alien enemy labor would not be hard to justify. The fact should not be overlooked that the consumer must ultimately pay these wages. 45

The question of unrest in the coal mines continued to preoccupy the Edmonton Journal during the winter of 1918, a preoccupation ostensibly due to the Journal's concern for the plight of the public:

In Canada men and women have frozen to death in the past because of strikes in the mines. Immense losses have been sustained by those who had nothing to do with railroading because of a dispute between railway companies and those on their payrolls. 46

In spite of the populace freezing to death because of mining strikes, the Journal subsequently reassured its readership that all was not bleak for, according to an article by Mr.

⁴⁵ Edmonton Journal, January 1, 1918.

⁴⁶ Edmonton Journal, January 5, 1918.

John T. Stirling in the Canadian Mining Institute Bulletin cited by the daily paper, "...the production for the year [1917] was approximately 4,700,000 tons which constitutes a record."⁴⁷ The Journal did not explain why some of this massive tonnage was not rushed to those persons on the verge of freezing to death at the time of strikes.

The Journal's concern about striking miners was not shared by the Bulletin with the same degree of vehemence. The "alien element", tending to support Hon. Frank Oliver prior to the disenfranchisement in 1917, was extended some degree of charity. Disputes in local mines in September, 1918, were covered in a contrasting manner by the two dailies. When miners struck at the Bell mine at Namao (operated by Sturgeon Consolidated Collieries), the Journal headlined the event with the news that "Aliens Benefit If Wages Go Up" and that "The Owners State They Will Close Up If Workers Win". The Sturgeon dispute was regarded as a part of a movement for wage ingreases at local mines (Bush, Humberstone, Clover Bar, Twin City, McPeck, and the Dawson) initiated by the U.M.W.A. Villains in this clamor for wage increases were S. Begalli and P. M. Christopher, two union organizers. What galled the Journal was that:

...a large majority of the miners for whom these high wages are now being demanded are aliens, the proportion running from fifty to seventy per cent in the Edmonton mines and even to larger figures in the other fields. Alien miners at

⁴⁷Edmonton Journal, January 15, 1918.

Pochontas, ...have...it is said, been drawing at the rate of \$20.00 per day, and have been dissatisfied at that. 48

The following day, the Journal reported that a settlement had been reached at the Sturgeon mine. John Lomas, President of the Sturgeon local #418 of the U.M.W.A., signed an agreement terminating on April 1, 1919. The paper reported that:

The complexion of the mining force at Namao is said to be pretty evenly divided between British subjects and aliens. President Lomas is himself a returned soldier.... 49

Happily, considering that September 19 headline, the mine owners did not "Close Up", but decided to pass on wage increases to the consumer in the form of higher prices.

The Bulletin ignored the "alien" question when discussing the campaign for higher wages. A headline on September 20, 1918, revealed that [the] "Consumer, if Proposed Schedule Becomes Effective, Will Have to Pay Much More Per Ton for Coal". The situation at the Humberstone company mine was focussed upon, and some slight attention was paid to the situation at the Sturgeon Consolidated Collieries. Listing wage increases to the Humberstone miners from July, 1916 to July, 1918, it was concluded within the page one "news item" that:

It is amply evident from this statement of successive increases of wages to the miners that

⁴⁸Edmonton Journal, September 19, 1918.

⁴⁹Edmonton Journal, September 20, 1918.

increase of prices to the consumer has accompanied and kept pace with the increase of wages. ...[T]he fuel controller who has, ...required the operators to make increases of wages to the miners has...authorised the operators and dealers to increase the price to the consumer. 50

Unrest on Canadian railways received considerable coverage in Edmonton's papers. The Journal on January 4, gave prominence to the actions of Director General McAdoo in promoting the smooth functioning of U.S. railways. As McAdoo was instrumental in establishing pay scales for U.S. railway employees which eventually set similar wage patterns for Canadian railroaders, this coverage indicated impending Canadian developments. Hence, on February 11, 1918, the Southam paper proclaimed that "4,000 C.P.R. Men Given Generous Wage Increases". The men affected in western Canada were mainly freight employees at this stage, and their increases were reported to be nearly 25%.

The federated shopmen were similarly attempting to gain pay increases on the basis of the U.S. McAdoo awards, but the possibility of strike action existed when the Canadian Railway War Board and the negotiators of the shopmen reached an impasse over the extent of such awards. The Journal suggested that the strike threat existed because the shopmen and their negotiators were somewhat moronic and incapable of understanding the benefits to be bestowed upon them because of the McAdoo awards and the liberality of the

⁵⁰ Edmonton Bulletin, September 20, 1918.

Railway War Board.⁵¹ The situation, according to the paper on July 8, 1918, was so serious that a general strike of shopmen throughout Canada was a real possibility. On July 10, railway shopmen in Winnipeg voted in favor of a strike, this strike having the potential of triggering a nation-wide shutdown. On July 11, the Journal intimated that it was impatience motivating the railway employees; they were not "...prepared to wait till the McAdoo award had been given in the United States".⁵² The Bulletin clearly indicated why the shopmen did not strike. A headline on July 20 revealed that "International Presidents of Shopmen's Unions in U.S. Opposed to Strike in Canada." Minor headlines added that the U.S. presidents "Will Refuse All Support in Event of Canadian Unions Rejecting McAdoo Award as Amended" and "Charters Will Be Rescinded, It is Declared, and Unions Left To Shift for Themselves." The "international" presidents were merely applying policies of the American Federation of Labor to their Canadian appendages (i.e., as far as possible, 'no strikes in wartime'.)⁵³

The possibility of the shopmen striking, while diminished, raised the question of an east-west cleavage within the ranks of organized labor. Hence, the Bulletin revealed on July 23 that the "...intervention of the railway

⁵¹Edmonton Journal, July 6, 1918.

⁵²Edmonton Journal, July 11, 1918.

⁵³Edmonton Bulletin, July 20, 1918.

department of the American Federation of Labor...was sufficient to prevent the sending out of a strike call to railway shopmen's committees negotiating with the Railway War Board at Montreal, East and West clashed, the East for retaining good relations with the American Federation of Labor, and the West for taking drastic action and that at once."⁵⁴ This sectional cleavage was accented during the postal strikes of late July and early August, 1918.

Letter carriers and mail clerks struck at major centres, such as Toronto, Winnipeg, and Vancouver, as well as at numerous minor centres. The demands of the strikers were modest, those of the Toronto letter carriers, for example, consisting of a request for a pay scale with minimum pay being set at \$1,000 per year and the maximum being \$1,400 per annum. However, pending a pay settlement, the mere establishment of a board of conciliation would have appeased the mailmen.⁵⁵ The federal government's reluctance to establish such a board prolonged the strikes until the end of July, 1918. Negotiations over various points in contention extended into August. The reticence of the government to negotiate encouraged advocates of general strike action in western cities. The Bulletin reported on July 27 that a conference of western postal employees convened at Winnipeg:

On the arrival here of representatives of the various branches of the postal workers' organiz-

⁵⁴Edmonton Bulletin, July 23, 1918.

⁵⁵Ibid.

ations throughout the West a conference will be held at which, it is expected, a western strike committee will be organized with Winnipeg at its headquarters. 56

That a general strike did not ensue over the postal dispute was due to some belated compromises by the Unionist government and its Minister of Labor, the Hon. T. W. Crothers.⁵⁷

Editorially, the Edmonton press lamented the inconvenience experienced by that metaphysical entity, the "General Public", during the postal dispute. The Bulletin, at first used the strike as an opportunity to verbally flog the Unionist regime. An editorial stressed that the labor unrest was caused by the high cost of living which favored nobody "except the millionaires". The solution to this problem was to secure the services of a Minister of Labor "with initiative and energy" since T. W. Crothers was "so completely lacking in those qualities."⁵⁸ The Journal responded by denying the existence of any significant labor unrest in Canada, this assertion being based upon statistics disseminated by the Department of Labor which revealed that the Dominion was "...singularly free from industrial unrest since the war began."⁵⁹ This happy state, which must have surprised numerous observers of the labor scene, was contrasted by the Journal to that which existed in Australia

⁵⁶ Edmonton Bulletin, July 27, 1918.

⁵⁷ Edmonton Bulletin, August 1, 1918.

⁵⁸ Edmonton Bulletin, July 23, 1918.

⁵⁹ Edmonton Journal, July 24, 1918.

where real labor unrest existed.

A few days later, the Journal decided that there was, perhaps, something serious afoot within Canada's postal service:

That the employees have had genuine grievances is quite clear and there has been dilatoriness in dealing with them. Just where the blame lies at Ottawa will be determined later.

.....

But [the government] is not disposed to be arbitrary and unfair and a settlement satisfactory to all concerned should be possible at an early date. 60

Upon the settlement of the dispute, another editorial contradicted that printed on July 30:

The striking postal employees have gone back to work. They claim in their official announcement that it was necessary to strike in order to have their grievances given proper attention. The evidence does not support this claim.... 61

The Bulletin was able to achieve the same high level of "double think" attained by its rival. On July 27, the paper editorialized that there was no good reason why the government did not allow a Conciliation Board to attain a settlement of the postal strike. As the postmen possessed the right to strike, there ought to have been "some means of arriving at an amicable adjustment of their differences with their employers."⁶² Two days later, another editorial concluded that:

⁶⁰Edmonton Journal, July 30, 1918.

⁶¹Edmonton Journal, August 1, 1918.

⁶²Edmonton Bulletin, July 27, 1918.

On such statement of the case as The Bulletin has been able to secure, it does not seem that the circumstances justified the drastic action that has been taken by the members of the mail service in many of the cities of Canada. 63

Edmonton's postal employees did not participate in the mail strike. On July 22, the Journal reported that the Edmonton postmen were generally opposed to the idea of striking even though they supported the pay increases being fought for in other Canadian cities. At a meeting on July 24, which was reported in the Bulletin on July 25, it was decided by the Edmonton postmen 19 to 38 not to go on strike. The same edition of the Bulletin falsely proclaimed that the "Postal Men's Strike Now Is Settled" and similarly transmitted a threat emanating from Deputy Postmaster General Coulter that the strikers "would have to return to work and failing that the government would use all its power in dealing with them."⁶⁴ The Edmonton postal employees were willing to participate in the negotiations leading up to the settlement of the dispute, and were willing to share in any of the benefits being gained by the strikers of other cities. It was therefore reported in the Bulletin that A. D. Campbell, secretary-treasurer of the local branch of the Letter Carriers' Union, would depart for Ottawa on July 31 to take part in the negotiations.⁶⁵

⁶³Edmonton Bulletin, July 29, 1918.

⁶⁴Edmonton Bulletin, July 25, 1918.

⁶⁵Edmonton Bulletin, July 30, 1918.

The failure of the Edmonton employees to strike was, naturally, viewed favorably by the city's dailies. The Journal commended the local postmen for taking "the right stand" when they realized that the inconvenience and losses caused by the strike "outweighed the arguments in favor of a strike."⁶⁶ The Bulletin concurred, stating that "the postmen of Edmonton are entitled to the best possible consideration at the hands of the citizens for their forbearance in the matter."⁶⁷ The Edmonton Trades and Labor Council was not subjected to the same editorial praise. At a special meeting of the executive committee of the E.T. & L.C., the postmen's strike was discussed and the following recommendation was made:

"The executive committee recommends that the Trades and Labor Council endorse the attitude adopted by the striking mail carriers and mail clerks of Western Canada, in endeavoring to secure through an arbitration board redress of their grievances." ⁶⁸

While this recommendation only suggested that the "attitude" adopted by the strikers be endorsed, the Bulletin was impelled to editorialize that the "Trades and Labor Councils of the West" seemed inclined to "support the strike by calling a general strike." Notwithstanding the fact that the E.T. & L.C. executive made no reference to a general strike, the paper went on to maintain that organized labor should not be

⁶⁶ Edmonton Journal, July 30, 1918.

⁶⁷ Edmonton Bulletin, July 27, 1918.

⁶⁸ Cited in the Edmonton Bulletin, July 30, 1918.

used as a "weapon of aggression" against Canadians. The individual Canadian had rights to be defended and would protect them if "pushed to the wall."

As an individualist he fights the battle of life single-handed, and prefers to do it that way, but it is possible to create a stress of circumstance that will impel or compel even ordinary individualistic citizens to combine for the support or order as well as law in the state upon whose protection they must depend for the security of life and property. ⁶⁹

The Calgary freight handlers dispute received extensive coverage in the Edmonton press, giving two-fisted, rugged-individualistic editorial writers for the Bulletin additional cause for concern. Unfortunately, editorial biases crept from the editorial pages of the paper into its ostensibly factual reporting of the dispute. The dispute, according to the Bulletin, was initiated when the C.P.R. discharged D. C. Evans, assistant foreman in the outbound freight sheds, and promoted to his place a man not entitled to this promotion.⁷⁰ From this beginning the dispute escalated until it threatened to tie up the C.P.R. freight shipments throughout western Canada. Edmonton became involved in the dispute when local members of the B.R.C.⁷¹ resolved unanimously to support the Calgary strikers on September

⁶⁹Edmonton Bulletin, August 1, 1918.

⁷⁰Edmonton Bulletin, September 24, 1918.

A more exact description of the dispute, and its causes, is found in Chapter two.

⁷¹For the full name of the union, see Chapter two.

26.⁷² In spite of this unanimity reported by the Bulletin, the Edmonton freight handlers experienced some second thoughts about their solidarity with their Calgary counterparts if the headline of October 1, "Freight Men Resign From International", is to be believed. The news item so headlined proceeded to inform the reader that the Edmonton C.P.R. employees, on September 30, rescinded their resolution of support to the Calgarians. This was followed by their resignation from the B.R.C.:

After considering the action of the Calgary men from every viewpoint, they decided that their decision was not only hasty but very irregular.⁷³

Freight handlers from most other cities on the C.P.R. line did not doubt the justice of the Calgarians' cause. A general sympathetic walk-out was impending which would effect centres from Port Arthur to Vancouver.⁷⁴ The Bulletin reported that "[t]wenty members of the...union, employed with the C.P.R. [in Edmonton]...went on strike at the C.P.R. freight sheds on Thursday [October 3] at ten o'clock...."⁷⁵ The paper did not reconcile the fact, reported on October 4, of the freight handlers walk out with their alleged resignation from the union that was organizing the strike. This same confusion existed in Journal coverage, the latter paper

⁷²Edmonton Bulletin, September 27, 1918.

⁷³Edmonton Bulletin, October 1, 1918.

⁷⁴Edmonton Bulletin, October 4, 1918.

⁷⁵Ibid.

not only reporting on October 1 the withdrawal of the local freight handlers from their strike action, but also revealing that:

Conditions in the Calgary and Lethbridge freight sheds of the Canadian Pacific are now normal, all embargoes having been lifted and business is again being handled without interruption. 76

The following day saw the same revelation, that a general strike on the C.P.R. in the West was impending, that appeared in the Bulletin.⁷⁷

The Journal on October 2, in addition to informing the reader that the "Ultimatum to C.P.R. Expires Thursday", attempted to dispel any illusion that the impending strike may have been due to the company's parsimony by disclosing that "Big Increases In Salary Go To C.P.R. Clerks" followed by the sub-headlines "75,000 Are Affected -- Pay Roll Advances By \$22,000,000."⁷⁸ When the Edmonton employees struck on Thursday, October 3, the Journal reported the fact along with additional news certain to comfort an apprehensive public:

The local strike of the C.P.R. freight handlers...has been settled, as far as the company has been concerned. With fourteen new men and six women who commenced work in the afternoon, there has been practically no interference with the moving of local freight. 79

⁷⁶Edmonton Journal, October 1, 1918.

⁷⁷Edmonton Journal, October 2, 1918.

⁷⁸Ibid.

⁷⁹Edmonton Journal, October 3, 1918.

The resolution of the Edmonton Trades and Labor Council to "endorse the action of the local C.P.R. freight handlers" was reported on October 8 along with the reassuring news that:

The council was in a critical mood and determined to adopt no hasty course which would bring down ridicule upon it. While they agreed with the claims of the freight handlers, the olive branch course was infinitely preferable at the moment. 80

The Calgary dispute was tentatively settled on October 22, 1918. Undoubtedly, the settlement was speeded up by the fact that, on October 11, 1918, the federal government issued an order-in-council banning all strikes and lockouts for the duration of the war.⁸¹ This Unionist decree caused the Edmonton Bulletin to effuse indignation. In an editorial entitled "Government By Divine Right", it asserted that the Unionist order-in-council was "revolutionary in character":

Hitherto the right to strike has been freely accorded to workingmen in Canada. It has been an accepted part of the law of the land that working men might combine and leave their work as a means of enforcing demands made. Such a reversal of principle as forbidding the right to strike cannot be successfully enforced by merely the written word. There must be behind it the means and the action of enforcement. 82

This editorial was in obvious contradiction to many others written previously about strikes and strikers. This

⁸⁰ Edmonton Journal, October 8, 1918.

⁸¹ Edmonton Bulletin, October 12, 1918.

⁸² Edmonton Bulletin, October 18, 1918.

vacillation was perhaps due to an uncertainty on the part of the Bulletin as to which was worse -- strike action by organized labor or actions taken by the Unionist government. The Unionist government did not wish strike action to interfere with its effort to subdue the Hun, and used alternately strong-armed methods and dialogue and conciliation to prevent protracted strikes. One strong-armed method was the use or threatened use, of an "anti-loafing law" enacted by order-in-council in April, 1918. Such a threat was extended in May, 1918 when civic employees in Winnipeg struck, and other unions commenced strike action in a sympathetic movement which could have terminated in a general strike.⁸³ Prime Minister Borden hinted darkly in the House of Commons that the "anti-loafing law" could very well be invoked against the Winnipeg strikers:

"I should very greatly doubt, speaking without much consideration," Sir Robert added, "whether persons who are proceeding on what is known as a sympathetic strike would thereby free themselves from the penalties of the order in council passed in April and commonly known as the anti-loafing law." 84

Statements of this nature, thinly veiled threats against union activity, were viewed favorably or unfavorably by the Bulletin depending upon that paper's inclination at a specific time. The Journal, on the other hand, waxed enthusiastic at each and every tactic followed by the Unionists to

⁸³ Edmonton Bulletin, May 19, 1918.

⁸⁴ Edmonton Bulletin, May 21, 1918.

contain labor unrest.

One tactic has already been alluded to when the postal strikes were being examined. The Department of Labor denied that Canada was suffering from any serious labor unrest. The Journal featured this good news on page one, headlining it with the statements that "This Country Fortunate In Labor Trouble" and "Comparison With the Other Lands Puts Canada In Favorable Light."

At the present time, from Cape Breton to Vancouver Island, there are no more than five or six trifling strikes, most of them about a week old, and involving in all something less than 250 men; some of them are not of more than local importance. ⁸⁵

Considering the maelstrom wherein this statement was made, it can be considered nothing less than straight propaganda intended to soothe the apprehensions of a public confronted by industrial warfare within Canada, and armed warfare from without.

The Journal chose not to acknowledge the contradiction between its article of June 19, and the one published a few months later headlined with "Cabinet Board To Investigate Labor Troubles" and "To Frame Legislation to Increase Well-Being of Masses of the People."⁸⁶ The board referred to was "a sub-committee of the reconstruction and development committee of the "Dominion cabinet",⁸⁷ chaired by

⁸⁵ Edmonton Journal, June 19, 1918.

⁸⁶ Edmonton Journal, August 7, 1918.

⁸⁷ Edmonton Bulletin, August 8, 1918.

Senator Gideon Robertson and intended to keep the cabinet committee "in touch with labor conditions throughout Canada and to recommend for its consideration policies and measures to be adopted in respect of the labor problems both during the war and as they may be expected to arise after the termination of the war".⁸⁸ Later, when Robert Borden spoke at a Labor Day luncheon at the Canadian National Exhibition, he predicted that because of the "Canadian board of adjustment", consisting of members of the Canadian Railway Board and railway union employees, adjustments would be "promptly and satisfactorily effected."⁸⁹ Borden maintained that industrial harmony was necessary to the war effort, an undoubtedly correct statement, but the "promptness" and "satisfaction" to be derived from the board of adjustment was very questionable when the unrest on the railways during September and October, 1918, is considered as well as the use of the order-in-council of October 11 to end existing strike action.

The October decree forbidding strike action was headlined on page two of the October 12 Journal:

Provisions For Settlement of Labor Disputes Makes Strikes Illegal Hereafter
Order-in-Council Forbids, For Duration of War,
Drastic Measures on Part of Either Workers or
Employers, Severe Penalties for Violation of
Ruling. ⁹⁰

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Edmonton Journal, September 3, 1918.

⁹⁰ Edmonton Journal, October 12, 1918.

The Bulletin headline, featured on page one, added the following information:

Persons of Military Age Among Employees or Employers
Violating Regulations Will be Drafted for Military
Service -- Action Taken Because of Provisions Already⁹¹
Made for Prompt and Equitable Settlement of Disputes.

Coverage of trade union activities during the period following the October 11 order-in-council illustrates that organized labor did not agree that provisions already existed for a "prompt and equitable settlement of disputes." The Bulletin, under the heading "Calgary Labor Unions Defy Government", indicated the temper of organized labor in that city:

At a very large meeting of Calgary labor men held today for the purpose of discussing the recent order-in-council prohibiting strikes...resolutions were passed with only one objector, he objecting because they were not strong enough. ⁹²

Edmonton objections were more belated and somewhat subdued. A statement published in the Bulletin indicated the position of the Edmonton Trades and Labor Council and the Alberta Federation of Labor:

The recent order-in-council forbidding strikes while the war lasts is an indirect violation of the policy of the Dominion government as placed before labor representatives in February last, and we are in accord with President of the Trades Congress, Tom Moore, of Ottawa, in his protests made to the Dominion government, on this recent order-in-council affecting the wage-earners of Canada. ⁹³

⁹¹ Edmonton Bulletin, October 12, 1918.

⁹² Edmonton Bulletin, October 12, 1918.

⁹³ Edmonton Bulletin, October 24, 1918.

The strike action of organized labor in 1918 was greatly reduced because of the October 11 governmental action. At the termination of fighting, winter had set in and the zeal of trade unionists for strike action had diminished. During 1918, many political and labor militants had their reputations attacked through innuendo in the press that their actions were seditious and played into the hands of the enemy. That many militants were of non-Anglo-Celtic stock did nothing to enhance the credibility of dissenting minorities. The fact that these groupings often relied upon Anglo-Celtic leadership, not rarely recent immigrants from Great Britian, was conveniently overlooked by the daily press. Upon the defeat of "the Hun", the suggestion that dissenters were German agents and traitors was no longer effective. A new "threat" had to be found so that appropriate smear campaigns could be launched against union leaders and political dissenters who threatened the status quo. Such a "threat" was found in the Bolsheviki, and the newly-created Soviet Union replaced Germany as the font from which all treason and sedition emanated.

Chapter VII

THE "RED SCARE" AS PROJECTED BY THE EDMONTON PRESS

Radical Politics, Labor, and the Edmonton Press

While the number of persons in Canada who could be categorized as being "communists", "radical socialists", "revolutionaries", or "Bolsheviks" in 1918 and 1919 was slight, the "red scare" of these years was of considerable importance when the press reaction to the O.B.U. secessionist movement is analyzed. While members of the Socialist Party of Canada were alleged by the Unionist government to have participated in a "seditious conspiracy" to promote revolution in Canada, and while the press at this time did little to refute these allegations, D. C. Masters in The Winnipeg General Strike has adequately demonstrated the falsity of those accusations.¹

The Socialist Party of Canada was not a significant political force in Alberta. One of its few effective leaders was Joe Knight who, with his wife S. J. Knight, maintained the S.P.C. presence in Edmonton. That Joe Knight was not backed by a large number of political allies was demonstrated by the fact that, during the December, 1917 federal election, he had contested the Red Deer seat and received 701 votes (as opposed to 8,363 votes received by the winning Unionist

¹See "Strike or Revolution?", D. C. Masters, The Winnipeg General Strike, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1950), pp. 113-134.

candidate).² Knight had, in fact, served as S.P.C. candidate in several elections, and campaigned in various parts of the province. Obviously, there were few socialists of leadership calibre in Alberta even though Knight's vote in 1917 revealed that there were considerable numbers of persons willing to vote for socialist candidates.

The activities of Joe Knight and his socialist allies were criticised by those in the labor movement who objected to the political stance assumed by the S.P.C., and were working toward a labor party in Alberta with a political orientation more to the right of that of the Socialist Party. The position of the "laborites" was presented in the Edmonton Bulletin column, "In the World of Labor", on January 12, 1918:

[A feeling has emerged]...that the labor organization in Winnipeg has become dominated by Socialist and Social Democrat leaders. A large section of organized labor is said to be opposed to this leadership. A new labor party is now in process of formation.... Leaders, it is believed, will be chosen from those who have not been identified to any great extent with the movement in the past. Socialists and Social Democrats will be divorced from the new party.... 3

Coverage of the annual convention of the Alberta Federation of Labor in 1918 revealed that the same political split between "socialists" and "laborites" was occurring in Alberta as elsewhere.⁴

²Edmonton Journal, June 9, 1919.

³Edmonton Bulletin, January 12, 1918.

⁴Ibid.

The Bulletin shed some light on the extent to which the S.P.C. involved itself in the Edmonton labor movement. The Federal Workers' Union, No. 49, has been discussed in Part One of this thesis. It was stated that the F.W.U. local experienced difficulty in securing affiliation to the E.T. & L.C., and one reason for this difficulty was the number of socialists thought to belong to the union. The Bulletin's coverage of the E.T. & L.C. meeting of May 20, 1918, refers to this socialist element:

A representative of Federal Workers' Union No. 49 ...said...their opponents thought that their organization included Socialists and the remaining members of the I.W.W. In contradiction of this he stated that there were two I.W.W.'s who were not in good standing and seven members of the Socialist party. 5

As the year progressed, the activities of the Knights continued to be covered by Edmonton's daily papers. The arrest of Mrs. Knight in Winnipeg, who addressed a group of "International Socialists" there on Sunday, September 29, was headlined in the Journal with "Mrs. S. J. Knight Under Arrest For Sedition" and "Made Attack on the United States' Action in Entering War."⁶ The Bulletin coverage, headlined "Wife of Local Socialist Leader Charged in Winnipeg of Using Seditious Language," revealed that the accused was arrested by Winnipeg police upon information provided by military intelligence officers, and was charged with "having used

⁵Edmonton Bulletin, May 21, 1918.

⁶Edmonton Journal, October 3, 1918.

sedition language calculated to detract from the united effort of the Canadian people." The Bulletin published with this article, the same as that printed in the Journal, information gained from an interview with Mr. Knight:

Mr. Knight said to The Bulletin last night that Mrs. Knight had gone east for the purpose of undergoing an operation at the Mayo Bros [clinic] at Rochester, Minn. He had had no information relative to her arrest. There was nothing in the state of her health which would prevent her speaking in public, he said. ⁷

The S.P.C. naturally opposed the Unionist government's arrest and imprisonment of those who had banned literature in their possession. Early in 1919, a series of meetings were held throughout western Canada protesting these arrests, and one such meeting was held at the Empire theatre in Edmonton on January 19, 1919. Both Edmonton dailies covered this meeting, and this coverage was quite objective. Chairman of the meeting was J. W. Findlay, while speakers included Mayor J. Clarke, A. Farmilo, and J. White of the Dominion Labor Party. J. Knight of the S.P.C. spoke on behalf of his party while T. Russell, another socialist and member of Local 1325 of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters, spoke on behalf of the carpenters' union. The meeting was held under the auspices of the E.T. & L.C. and passed a resolution petitioning the Dominion government "for the immediate release of all political prisoners."⁸ The

⁷Edmonton Bulletin, October 3, 1918.

⁸Edmonton Journal, January 20, 1919.

Bulletin, in addition to giving the meeting page one coverage, lauded editorially the sponsors of the gathering:

If the conditions are as stated, those in charge of the meeting are to be congratulated on the tempered language in which action on the part of the Dominion authorities is requested...[T]here is nothing...to excuse the absurd and unjust procedure of jailing men who happen to be found with copies of publications in their possession which are more or less in general circulation.... 9

The January 19 meeting represented a "change of venue" for Joe Knight since, for the preceding two Sundays (January 5 and 12, 1919), he had been addressing Calgary audiences and, if the Bulletin account was accurate, made some quite radical statements:

Knight...made some strong revolutionary statements ..., advocating Bolsheviki methods which, he said, he represented. At the same time, he criticised the Labor movement with all others who were not Socialists of his stamp. 10

This prompted William Irvine of Calgary to challenge Knight to a debate on the subject:

Resolved that the revolutionary propaganda of the orthodox Socialists in Canada is detrimental to the workers' cause and is unscientific. 11

The debate was to transpire on Sunday, February 9.

At a later period, Joe Knight and William Irvine were to meet on the same platform, when addressing Calgary strikers, and apparently saw eye-to-eye on the issue of the Unionist government's handling of labor militancy. While

⁹Edmonton Bulletin, January 22, 1919.

¹⁰Edmonton Bulletin, January 16, 1919.

¹¹Ibid.

mention of this meeting was made in the Journal's editorial pages, and hence statements alleged to have emanated from Irvine are suspect, it was probably a militant gathering:

[Irvine] assured his audience that the present strike is but a skirmish with the forces of capital and that a grim fight lies ahead.... He condemned Hon. Gideon Robertson, minister of labor, asserting that the latter is merely a tool in the hands of a capitalist government.¹²

This Journal editorial lumped together Joe Knight and William Irvine as being instigators of "The Projected Revolution".

When not on the public platform, Knight and his fellow socialists were active in attempting to radicalize the E.T. & L.C. The January 20, 1919, meeting of the Council was important, for it involved the election of officers for the year ahead. J. R. Knight vied for the office of President, being defeated by R. McCreath. Following this, the socialist T. Russell tried to oust A. Farmilo from his long-held post of Secretary-Treasurer. During this election, some excitement took place "...when Joseph E. White questioned the standing of Delegate Farmilo." At contention was the issue that Farmilo represented a union local with almost no membership. "Mr. Farmilo explained his position and stated that the majority of his organization were overseas but that the charter had not been relinquished...."¹³ Farmilo was re-elected to his office.

At the January 20 meeting, Knight, in addition to

¹²Edmonton Journal, June 9, 1919.

¹³Edmonton Bulletin, January 21, 1919.

giving a report on the annual convention of the Alberta Federation of Labor, condemned the Dominion government for its delaying the distribution of Socialist literature through the mails. This condemnation occurred after a "strong and stirring" circular letter, distributed by C. S. Stevenson of the S.P.C. at Vancouver, was read and discussed.¹⁴ Knight also was articulate on the subject of the visit to Edmonton by the Russian "Princess Radziwill" who was to speak at the McDougall Church:

Delegate Knight followed with the intimation the Lady Nicholaeff, a highly cultured and well informed native of Russia...would attend the lecture to interrogate the Princess on the subject of Bolshevism and other subjects. 15

Newspaper coverage of the Socialist Party of Canada, and spokesmen such as Joe Knight, indicated the extent to which the Party was being influenced by the Russian Revolution during 1918 and 1919. Evidently the Party was even publicizing the travels of Russian nobility throughout Canada, nobility such as Lady Nicholaeff, who was apparently in hot pursuit of "Princess Radziwill", the latter undoubtedly exposing the "horrors of Bolshevism". The impact of the Russian Revolution and its alleged impact on Canadian trade union developments will now be investigated.

¹⁴Edmonton Journal, January 21, 1919.

¹⁵Ibid.

"Bolshevism" and Western Canadian Labor

In 1918, one could not read the Edmonton press without constant exposure to the Russian Revolution and the subsequent civil war. One day Bolshevism would be on the verge of total defeat, the next it would be a sinister force capable of overthrowing established societies everywhere. Hence, on January 1, 1918, the Journal revealed that the "Bolsheviki Have Been Defeated by the Cossacks." The article beneath the headline described the defeat of Soviet troops on the southwestern front, and the subsequent capture of 400 by their Cossack opponents.¹⁶ The Bulletin covered the same battle, and revealed on another page that the "Bolsheviki Revolt Was Managed and Financed By German Government" and "Documents Proved That Lenine [sic] Was Commissioned and Paid by Germany."¹⁷ Not only was the Soviet regime being defeated militarily according to the press, but it was also collapsing from within as a Journal headline revealed: "Reign of Bolsheviki Is Coming to an End; Masses Plan Rising."¹⁸

Upon the defeat of Germany, the daily press switched its big guns from "The Hun" to "The Bolsheviki". Early in 1919, no travesty was ignored by the Bolsheviki if the newspapers were to be believed. Hence, the Journal revealed

¹⁶Edmonton Journal, January 1, 1918.

¹⁷Edmonton Bulletin, January 1, 1918.

¹⁸Edmonton Journal, July 31, 1918.

that the "Tortures of the Middle Ages Added to Horrors of Warfare as Waged by the Bolshevists." According to "trustworthy" reports reaching Warsaw, the Bolshevists were "... adding tortures of the dark ages to the customary horrors of guerilla warfare."¹⁹ The Bulletin, not to be outdone by its rival, announced on January 16, 1919:

Riga in Hands of Bolsheviki;
Portions of City Are in Flames;
Murder and Plunder Rampant
Mitau is overflowing with refugees. German soldiers, the last persons leaving Riga, report that the city is burning in several places and the Russians and Letts are murdering and plundering.²⁰

While some observers of the situation may have supposed that the Bolshevists had plenty to occupy themselves with in Russia, the Canadian media disabused them of that delusion. On January 8, 1919, an advertisement published by the Journal for Maclean's Magazine asked the question: "Is Bolshevism Brewing in Canada?"

Bolshevism is reaching out to grapple the whole world, and the tentacles of its propaganda extend to every corner of the globe. Thomas M. Fraser...tells in the January number how the movement has gained a foothold in every industrial centre in Canada... 21

On the same page, a Journal editorial was headed "No Red Flags For Alberta." This editorial stated:

Red Socialist organizations are being formed in Alberta, the acknowledged aim and purpose of

¹⁹Edmonton Journal, January 6, 1919.

²⁰Edmonton Bulletin, January 16, 1919.

²¹Ibid.

which are to represent the revolutionary class of Russia and 'the sanest class of Germany.' 22

The editorial concluded with the reassuring statement that the Alberta Federation of Labor, headed by "moderates", would not be swayed by radical socialists and a split between the two elements was very likely.

The Bulletin did not deny the Journal's claim that there was a Bolshevik problem in Canada. It did, however, resent the allegation that western Canada was a "hot-bed of Bolshevism", an allegation it claimed was circulated in the East in order to slander the Liberal governments of the West:

This monstrous misrepresentation is left uncont-
radicted and available for use by those who seek to
strengthen the Government's position in the eastern
provinces by slandering the governments and people
of the western provinces. 23

"Bolshevism" was equated with "evil" by the press which soon focussed upon groupings and individuals upon which to apply this pejorative label. When, in 1918, the Winnipeg Trades and Labor Council discussed the question of initiating a general strike to aid striking metal workers, the Winnipeg Free Press published a strongly worded editorial on the subject which was given page one coverage by the Bulletin:

The Free Press characterizes the decision of the trades and labor leaders as "Bolshevikism, naked and unadorned" and calls upon the sane and con-

²²Ibid.

²³Edmonton Bulletin, January 10, 1919.

servative element in organized labor to combat the proposal to plunge the city into the useless discomforts of mob rule. 24

The Journal, too, soon fixed attention upon specific persons and groups. An article, entitled "Continent-Wide Plot In Canada, Declare Police," related the arrest of Andrew Bodarko who belonged to a "Union of Russian Workmen." In letters to the organization, the accused labelled the local authorities at Windsor as being "parasites" and urged Montreal members of the "Union" to fight against the "bloody militarism of Canada." The newspaper revelation of Bodarko's "plot" insinuated that the accused "pretended not to understand English" while being arraigned in police court. Apparently the inability of a Russian immigrant to understand English could only be "pretence."²⁵

The police and governmental authorities soon took steps to see that the "continent-wide plot" was suppressed. The Bulletin announced on September 27, 1918, that the activities of "foe aliens" were to be "curbed." This "curbing" involved the outlawing of thirteen organizations, the I.W.W. "heading the list" of groups which the Unionist government deemed to be a threat to Canada's security. While some groups had rather militant labels (such as the Social Democrats of the Bolsheviki and the Social Democrats of the Anarchists), others seemed quite innocuous. The majority of

²⁴Edmonton Bulletin, August 17, 1918.

²⁵Edmonton Journal, July 6, 1918.

the groups probably had a Slavic membership, but the Chinese National League and the Chinese Labor Association were on the list of proscribed organizations. The Bulletin article claimed that the government had "carefully investigated" the outlawed organizations which were alleged to have circulated literature "of a revolutionary and Bolsheviki character."²⁶

The Winnipeg General Strike provided ample scope for Edmonton's papers to reveal the extent of "Bolsheviki" involvement in western Canadian labor unrest. The Journal, relying on an item from Ford's Ottawa Service, headlined the news that "Attempted 'Red' Rule In Winnipeg Will Be Probed By Dominion." The item revealed that the federal authorities would take strong action when dealing with "... 'Reds', I.W.W.s or Bolshevists, who actually attempted to start a revolution or set up a soviet in Western Canada...."²⁷ The "Moscow Gold" allegation received considerable circulation at this time. A Journal news item revealed the opinion of a "highly-placed trade union leader" from Montreal. This person, who had "exceptional sources in information", disclosed that Bolshevik money, "printed on revolutionary presses either in Russia or some other place," was financing the Winnipeg strike. He based his "Moscow Gold" theory on a claim that a large number of U.S. five-dollar bills was "flooding" Winnipeg.²⁸

²⁶ Edmonton Bulletin, September 27, 1918.

²⁷ Edmonton Journal, May 24, 1919

²⁸ Edmonton Journal, June 4, 1919.

That the Winnipeg strike was a phase of "Red Revolution" in Canada was revealed in a Journal article headlined "Investigation Shows Strike At Winnipeg Was An Attempt At Establishing Bolshevism". U.S. and Canadian "secret servicemen", who were investigating the origins of the strike, were reported to have finished their probe and were informing the authorities about their findings. The "authorities" seemed to be, among others, "Consul General at Large for the United States, Stewart", who was in Winnipeg consulting with "Consul General Ryder". On the basis of information gathered from these "experts", the Citizens' Committee of 1,000 published a document entitled "The Winnipeg Revolutionary Strike" that revealed that the "revolution" started in Calgary. The revelations included the news that the "Bolshevist movement" originated at the Western Labor Conference which was "directed by the I.W.W. organization in the United States." The O.B.U. referendum committee was named the "'Red Five' executive for Canada." One of this "Red Five" was:

...J. Knight of Edmonton, one of the most notorious agitators of the mining district, and a person who demands the release from detention of men who were working in Canada for the German government during the war. 29

The Edmonton press actively participated in a campaign to "instruct" the public, and trade union members, about the "true nature" of Bolshevism. The Bulletin gave a

²⁹ Edmonton Journal, June 10, 1919.

definition of "Bolshevism" in an editorial entitled "The Wages of Class Greed":

Bolshevism is another name for class greed carried to the extreme. Its leaders did not content themselves with propounding a policy to enrich the wage-earners of Russia by the exploitation of the other classes in the community.... 30

The Bulletin sermonized to its readership that the "...fate that is closing about" the Bolsheviks must be warning to those who might be influenced by Bolshevik propaganda. F. E. Mercer, in his column "Trades Unions And Labor" in the Journal, explained at length what Bolshevism was all about:

Bolshevism is a system of dogmatics, framed and carried into practice by men of a school of materialist socialism, who are prepared to carry out their theories to the extreme logical conclusion of non-morality, iron discipline, and proletarian despotism. 31

The definition by Rev. Mercer was, of course, more sophisticated than that of the Bulletin editorial writer even though it was simplistic and based upon an ignorance of Marxist theory. That Mercer could rise above the crudity of the Bulletin editorialist was due to the fact that he was a member of the Labor Representation League and, later, the Dominion Labor Party. As the vicar of Saint Michael and All Angel's parish, an Anglican church in north Edmonton, he devoted his attention to a working-class congregation.³² Mercer was interested in promoting labor's involvement in

³⁰Edmonton Bulletin, September 26, 1918.

³¹Edmonton Journal, March 15, 1919.

³²Edmonton Journal, June 17, 1919.

politics in the British Laborite tradition, and hence strove to attack what he considered to be manifestations of extremism. He was closely associated with "moderates" of the E.T. & L.C. who agreed with his political viewpoint.

The Edmonton Branch of the Dominion Labor Party took active measures to combat what it considered to be manifestations of radicalism in Edmonton. One such attempt was somewhat less than spectacular when Peter Wright, supposedly a "British labor leader", spoke at the Trades and Labor Hall in Edmonton on February 25, 1919. The Journal covered this meeting but, perhaps somewhat ashamed of the farce, buried its coverage on page six. The article was entitled "Peter Wright of Seamen's and Firemen's Council Gives Splendid Address and Warns All to Beware of Bolshevism, Which is in the Air Like Influenza":

"I worked with Kerensky in Russia", declared Mr. Wright, "and I foresaw the end long before it came. And then came Trotzky [sic], the instigator of Bolshevism. Trotsky isn't his real name at all. He is Bauerstein [sic], a German agent -- the hound! I saw them killing off capitalists in Petrograd and the beginning of the reign of anarchy and chaos. Bolshevism is going like influenza through the air and you men should be careful. Try and divert this policy. If you don't..., you will be plunged in a bottomless abyss worse than hell."³³

The Bulletin coverage was on page one. One of the sub-headlines over the item was [Wright] "Poohs Poohs British Strikes and Calls Bolsheviks 'Wildmen of Borneo'." During his talk, "listened to with respectful attention by a fairly

³³Edmonton Journal, February 26, 1919.

large audience", he decried violence, denounced strikes as "brutal", declared himself in favor of political action for labor, and denounced "direct action". During the question period Wright "did not find it altogether plain sailing" even though he considered himself "an old dog at that game" and "was ready for all comers". Unfortunately, his answers did not always satisfy the questioners who had the impression that "he was trying to evade their points". Some of the questioners included socialists, Mrs. Knight being particularly vocal. Peter Wright, taking umbrage at a question asked by Mrs. Knight, declared her to be "insolent" and refused to answer her further.³⁴

The "red scare" was fully manifested in the pages of Edmonton papers during 1918 and especially 1919. The press, in addition to reflecting this fear of the "Bolshevik menace", did its best to combat what it supposed were manifestations of Bolshevism in Alberta and Edmonton. Organizations such as the Dominion Labor Party and the "international" craft unions strove also to combat "Bolshevism" and "extreme socialism", and their attempts received adequate coverage in the Journal and Bulletin. That a Bolshevik plot was non-existent in Edmonton, and the number of radical socialists limited, mattered little as the press, trade union establishment, Dominion Labor Party, touring Russian princesses, Chautauqua performers and vaudevillians strove

³⁴Edmonton Bulletin, February 26, 1919.

mightily to subdue that which was more of an idea than a material force in Edmonton after World War I.

Chapter VIII

PRESS COVERAGE OF THE O.B.U. SECESSIONIST MOVEMENT

The Rise of the O.B.U.

While the plans for the Western Labor Conference were formulated during a caucus meeting of western delegates at the September, 1918, convention of the Trades and Labor Congress at Quebec, press coverage of the convention gave little indication that such a Conference would occur. In the Journal, coverage of the annual T.L.C. gathering fluctuated from page one to page eleven. A page one article was headlined by the fact that "Every Worker in Canada Urged to Invest in War Loan by Trades Congress." This reassuring manifestation of patriotism was not unanimous, for western delegates were reported to have been highly critical of the exhortation. Opponents of the resolution were being labelled as "radicals", this label being highly spurious since Frank Wheatly of Bankhead, elected as a "moderate" President of the Alberta Federation of Labor in January, 1919, was highly vocal in opposition to the war loan resolution:

Frank Wheatly, Bankhead, Alberta, opposed the motion. He said recently, when the western miners, during a strike, asked for help they could not get it because "50,000 had been invested in war bonds for the "slaughterhouse". They could have starved. The ¹ money had been subscribed to protect the workers.

That an east-west dichotomy existed at the convent-

¹Edmonton Journal, September 20, 1918.

ion was obvious even in the abbreviated coverage given it by the Journal and Bulletin, both papers relying on the same wire services. One western goal was the organization of workers along industrial lines as opposed to the prevalent craft form of trade union organization. Several resolutions favoring such changes in union structure were introduced by delegates from the Winnipeg and Transcona labor councils, their arguments being that "organization industrially was the modern scientific method" and that the "capitalist class" could successfully defeat strike action by separate craft unions which had to obtain sanction from their international headquarters before they could strike.² The defeat of resolutions such as this provided the incentive for western delegates to work toward a regional labor conference.

The Bulletin column, "News And Comment Of the Labor World", gave additional information about the sentiments of western delegates at the T.L.C. meeting. The commentator revealed that "the delegation from western Canada was by far the most radical element of the gathering." On few matters was there any agreement between East and West, and this divergence of viewpoint promoted the feeling among western delegates "...that in order to get the more radical opinions of the labor movement before the people of Canada, a western convention should be held."³ The Western Labor Conference

²Edmonton Journal, September 21, 1918.

³Edmonton Bulletin, February 15, 1919.

was a subject for debate at the January convention of the Alberta Federation of Labor. One faction of A.F. of L. delegates wished the creation of a structure modelled on the same basis as the Canadian Council of Agriculture, whereas another desired a massive convention to which all locals could send delegates. It was the latter which ultimately materialized, this being against the wishes of the executive of the A.F. of L. which suggested that the T.L.C. be instructed to arrange a conference of four members from each province to form a uniform program.⁴ The A.F. of L. executive's suggestion, which was at variance with the policy of other western labor federations, would naturally have destroyed the raison d'être of the proposed conference since it would have delegated to the East-dominated T.L.C. executive planning authority for the western convention. The controversy generated by the question of the impending Calgary meeting led eventually to the whole question being tabled.⁵ The Bulletin coverage illustrates that, in spite of the radical rhetoric predominating at the Medicine Hat convention of the A.F. of L., the trade union establishment of the A.F. of L. and local trade councils had no intention of allowing the Western Labor Conference to jeopardize the status quo within the Alberta movement.

During February, 1919, Edmonton's papers began to

⁴Edmonton Bulletin, January 9, 1919.

⁵Ibid.

give more coverage to the impending Calgary conference. The February 18 meeting of the E.T. & L.C., at which Alfred Farmilo defeated Mrs. J. Knight in a contest for the position of Council delegate to the western conference, was given fairly adequate coverage in both newspapers. The reader may have experienced some confusion as to the intent of the conference since different commentators specified different objectives. The Bulletin specified that it would "...produce a well-defined attitude of the organized workers on the question of re-construction."⁶ When the column "Trades Union and Labor" first appeared in the Journal on February 22, 1919, its author, Rev. F. E. Mercer, discussed the March interprovincial conference:

It is expected that a real solution will be suggested by this convention to allay industrial unrest, especially as this effects Western Canada....⁷

Two weeks later, Mercer added that some "...of the delegates seem to think that the meeting will inaugurate the Communist Commonwealth of America, but others are not so sure."⁸ As the majority of delegates attending from Edmonton were representatives of international craft unions or conservative Canadian unions such as Civic Service Local 52, it is unlikely that the Edmonton delegation, as a whole, envisaged such a "Communist Commonwealth".

⁶Edmonton Bulletin, February 19, 1919.

⁷Edmonton Journal, February 22, 1919.

⁸Edmonton Journal, March 8, 1919.

Reporting to the Journal on the Calgary conference was F. E. Mercer. The first report, for March 13, was headlined with the statement that the Calgary meeting "Planned to Initiate Real Policy For Workers That Gov't Can Understand". The second report, datelined March 14, contained the sub-headline that "Friendly Greetings to Bolsheviks in Russia and Spartacans in Germany Sent by Convention at Calgary -- Release of All-Political Prisoners Demanded". The subsequent article revealed that the conference "radicals" had sprung the One Big Union scheme upon the delegates, and one of the more articulate opponents of the concept was Farmilo:

[On the report of the committee being taken up clause by clause] A. Farmilo (Edmonton) immediately objected to the adoption of any more before actual conditions had proved that the proper occasion had arrived for a change. 9

The reports of March 14 and March 15 were buried on page six of the Journal, a departure from the March 13 report which was page one news. This eclipsing process was probably due to the "radical" decisions of the conference; the March 15 report was headlined "Labor Convention Has Endorsed Soviet Rule As The Most Efficient". Mercer ruefully commented that:

The only real attempt at discussion arose through the motion of Alderman Broach, of Calgary, to endorse the recommendation of the Alberta Federation of Labor in favor of political action through a labor party. This was also laid on the table like

⁹Edmonton Journal, March 14, 1919.

the rest. J. R. Knight, of Edmonton, was of the opinion that the recommendation should be placed in the waste paper basket. 10

The Edmonton Journal, in an editorial, expressed the belief that the Western Labor Conference was not representative of the majority of western Canadian workers:

There is no need to fear that we shall have the conditions that exist in Russia reproduced in Canada. But the fact that a body of men, claiming to be representative of western labor, goes on record for such a change is bound to have a serious immediate effect. 11

The Bulletin's coverage emphasized the "radical" nature of the Conference also, but tended to be more impressionistic than that by Rev. Mercer who took considerable pains to describe the proposed structure of the One Big Union and the mechanics necessary to bring the union into being. Hence, when describing a key resolution at the Conference, to the effect that convention delegates recommend to their local unions that affiliation with "international" unions be terminated, the Bulletin coverage indicated some of the emotional debate which accompanied the passage of the resolution:

Man after man approved of the resolution and scorned the idea of being afraid of the international trades and labor and when the vote was taken and carried the roof rang with the cheers and roars of the delegates. 12

The "cheers" and "roars" which accompanied the assault

¹⁰Edmonton Journal, March 15, 1919.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Edmonton Bulletin, March 14, 1919.

against "international" craft unions did not reverberate in Edmonton, this reality being indicated quite fully in the Edmonton press.

The Loyalist-Secessionist Confrontation in Edmonton and Its Aftermath

That serious trouble could result during the implementation of the O.B.U. proposal was intimated in a Journal article entitled "Proposed Labor Organization May Fall Down On Referendum". The article suggested that the success of the O.B.U. referendum depended upon the reports delegates to the conference presented to their locals. It was suggested during a conference "post-mortem" discussion among "radicals" that the "internationals", should the referendum vote carry, would "...side with the employers in their effort to smash up the new organization...."¹³ This suggestion was prescient, especially as far as the mining industry was concerned.

The March 17 meeting of the E.T. & L.C., which followed close on the heels of the Calgary conference, was given considerable prominence in Edmonton's two dailies. The meeting was concerned with a report by Farmilo who "maintained that the conditions did not truly represent organized labor in Western Canada."¹⁴ A resolution to repudiate the action of the Conference, and subsequent discussion, domin-

¹³Edmonton Journal, March 17, 1919.

¹⁴Edmonton Bulletin, March 18, 1919.

ated the entire meeting. Both newspapers indicated the polarization which occurred within the Council regarding the O.B.U. question. Accounts of the meeting, while biased in favor of the E.T. & L.C. "loyalists", tended to agree with each other. The Journal account was more calculated to create a negative response toward the "secessionists" on the part of the reader:

Heated arguments and caustic repartee marked the meeting of the trades and labor council Monday night at which a resolution was passed repudiating the labor convention recently held in Calgary. One delegate referred to the convention as "disguised Bolshevism" and this appeared to be the feeling of a large portion of the meeting. 15

Events after the March 17, 1919, meeting of the E.T. & L.C. were leading to the April 21 "purge" of key O.B.U. delegates from the Edmonton Council. The Edmonton press actively assisted the "loyalists" in their efforts to contain the O.B.U. secessionist movement. The April 7 meeting of the Council, which resulted in the acceptance of the "Seattle Plan", saw a very sharp polarization between the two labor factions when the resolution endorsing the "Seattle Plan" passed by one vote. Well before the April 7 meeting, Rev. Mercer had extolled the "loyalist" alternative to the O.B.U. plan in his Journal column of March 29. Twenty column inches, a large amount of newspaper space, was devoted to the American Federation of Labor-approved scheme.¹⁶ While

¹⁵Edmonton Journal, March 18, 1919.

¹⁶Edmonton Journal, March 29, 1919.

the Journal on June 21, 1919, devoted fifty column inches to the constitution formulated for the O.B.U., this "hatchet-job" based on content lifted from an edition of the B.C. Federationist, could in no way assist the O.B.U. supporters already purged from the E.T. & L.C. The Bulletin, it must be stressed, also discussed at length the "Seattle Plan" on its labor page prior to the April 7, 1919 meeting.¹⁷

Prior to the April 21 meeting of the E.T. & L.C., the Edmonton papers attacked the O.B.U. and its supporters. Similarly, generous coverage was given to those union locals which went on record as being against the O.B.U. concept. On April 5, Rev. Mercer in his column (given prominence on page two of the Journal whereas previously it was buried on about page ten or twelve) criticised the holding of a referendum on the issue since, as the O.B.U. concept was so unclear, it was illogical to take a vote on the question. Industrial unionism was not, however, without merit if certain favorable conditions were met:

Industrial unionism is the correct method but it must in the case of Canadian industries be international unionism, because the industries of Canada and the United States are so closely connected. 18

Apparently the Journal "labor expert" was not following the successful growth of the C.B.R.E.

¹⁷See "Plebiscite Is Asked on Seattle Plan", Edmonton Bulletin, April 8, 1919.

¹⁸Edmonton Journal, April 5, 1919.

Under the headline "Machinists Vote Against Proposed 'One Big Union'", the Journal publicized the refusal to endorse the O.B.U. by local 817 of the International Association of Machinists "...until such time as this question has been discussed internationally as proposed by the Seattle central labor body...."¹⁹ The Edmonton Bulletin coverage of this machinists' resolution, given page one coverage on April 12, possessed similar content as its article was based on the same press release sent to the Journal.

The purge of delegates of union locals which supported the O.B.U., occurring on April 21, received lengthy coverage in the Edmonton press on April 22. The Journal headline read "Secession Delegates Lose Their Seats in Edmonton Trades and Labor Council" and "President Explodes Surprise Bomb When He Expelled All Those Who Had Favored 'One Big Union' Scheme Formulated at Calgary." The Bulletin headline revealed that "Seats of Delegates Favoring One Big Union Declared Vacant By Trades and Labor Council" and "Sensation Sprung at Meeting of Council Last Night by Ruling of Executive Committee." That delegates expelled all who favored personally the O.B.U. scheme was false. George Perkins, for example, was expelled from the E.T. & L.C. because his local of the machinists' union supported the O.B.U. and not himself personally. Because of the publicity given that he was an O.B.U. proponent, Perkins had to elicit

¹⁹Edmonton Journal, April 12, 1919.

the intervention of those in the trade union establishment. At an E.T. & L.C. meeting on August 18, Perkins revealed that "...he had lost his job, had been black-balled generally in the shops, and even by men coming from Winnipeg had been told he was known as a Red and an O.B.U. agitator."²⁰ Forgiveness was extended Perkins after his abject recantation. The power of the press to inaccurately indicate Perkins' views was clearly indicated by this episode.

The meeting of April 27, organized to oppose the expulsion of delegates from the E.T. & L.C. on April 21, was reported on in both Edmonton papers on April 28. This meeting was held in a packed Albion Hall. At the meeting a resolution was passed condemning "the high handed methods of the executive in unseating the delegates."²¹ One speaker, Alderman Broach of Calgary, stated that he had been sent to Edmonton by his trades and labor council "to speak against the high handed manner of the [E.T. & L.C.] Executive in expelling those local unions."²² Joe Knight and Alex Susmar were additional speakers who attacked the action of the E.T. & L.C. executive. Protest meetings such as this, while indicative of the amount of pro-O.B.U. sentiment which existed within Edmonton, could not reverse the tide which favored the "international" craft unions and their attacks

²⁰Edmonton Journal, August 19, 1919.

²¹Edmonton Bulletin, April 28, 1918.

²²Ibid.

against the O.B.U. movement. That those attacks were justified was not doubted by "loyalists" such as Elmer Roper who stated, under the heading "A House Divided ---", the following:

International trade unionism must stand steady on its course.... Better far to have a small movement steady, strong and advancing....

There is no desire in the minds of international trade unionists to interfere with the activities of the O.B.U. Only as that organization seeks to disrupt our institutions is it necessary for us to set our face firmly against it. We are convinced... that the [T.L.C.] and the American Federation of Labor are pursuing the proper course in purging international trades unionism of the disrupting influences. 23

The creation of the O.B.U., during and after the Western Labor Conference, was given profuse, although distorted, coverage by the Edmonton press. The leadership within the Alberta Federation of Labor and the E.T. & L.C., realizing that the western conference would assume a militant posture, was able to ensure that the "right type" of delegate would predominate among the Edmonton contingent. The Calgary convention of the B.C. Federation of Labor, held immediately prior to the Western Labor Conference, not only produced its own "radical" resolutions, but its delegates remained in the city to enthusiastically endorse similar resolutions including those which pertained to the proposed O.B.U. The January, 1919, convention of the A.F. of L. occurred two months prior to the Calgary meeting and the executives of the A.F. of L. and the E.T. & L.C. could easily

²³"Labor News and Views", Edmonton Bulletin, August 16, 1919.

predict the types of resolutions which would predominate at the March gathering. O.B.U. supporters in Edmonton, such as Berg and Knight, having revealed their intentions too early within the Edmonton labor movement, made themselves "sitting ducks" for those "loyalists" dominant within Edmonton. Hence, the April 21 purge of O.B.U. proponents within the E.T. & L.C. was relatively easy, and the Edmonton Labor centre, as opposed to those in Winnipeg and Vancouver, was "made safe" for international craft unionism. Edmonton could hence serve as a "beachhead" for a counterattack by the "internationals". The press, rather than merely reporting this assault against the secessionists within the local labor movement, rendered it active assistance by propagating the views of such "loyalists" as Elmer Roper and "labor's friend", F. E. Mercer.

Chapter IX

PRESS COVERAGE OF LABOR UNREST IN 1919

The General Strike Movement

The Seattle General Strike, considered by labor historians as being the prototype of Canadian and U.S. general strikes in 1919, commenced on February 6. The Bulletin headlined the fact with "55,000 Union Men Went Out on Strike in Seattle on Thursday."¹ This walkout was intended to demonstrate sympathy with 25,000 striking shipyard employees, many of whom were members of metal trades unions.² The strike leaders, hailing the action as being the first of its kind in the U.S., created a general strike committee and various structures later copied by other general strike proponents. Different stages of the strike were repeated at Winnipeg and elsewhere. The beginning of the strike saw the dilemma among strike leaders as to which utilities should remain in operation.³ Saber rattling by Seattle's mayor, Ole Hanson, was calculated to terminate the strike by creating schisms within the ranks of the strikers:

[The mayor]...issued the following notice to the strike committee: "I hereby notify you that unless the sympathetic strike is called off at 8 a.m., February 8, I will take steps to operate all essential industries and place this city under

¹Edmonton Bulletin, February 7, 1919.

²Edmonton Journal, February 6, 1919.

³Edmonton Bulletin, February 7, 1919.

control of the federal government.⁴

The Edmonton press reported efforts by civic and state authorities, as well as conservative labor leaders under instructions from the American Federation of Labor, to terminate the strike. Hence, the general strike committee, reacting to the intervention of A.F. of L. leaders, was reported to have called off the strike on February 10 and to have ordered the strikers to resume working by noon on February 11. Threats of loss of charters and strike benefits, as well as other penalties, were issued by the heads of "international" unions, and this provoked an almost inevitable split between labor "militants" and "conservatives."⁵

The press emphasized the role the I.W.W. played in the strike. After the return to work order on February 10, Mayor Hanson gloated over the supposed demoralization of the strikers and the schism "between labor and the I.W.W.'s." Accompanying the Journal account of this was, on the same page, an article headlined by "U.S. Deporting Fifty-Four I.W.W. Members; Taken to Atlantic Under Guard." Forty of the alleged I.W.W. adherents slated for summary deportation came from Seattle:

The majority of the men were alien labor agitators picked up by officers of the United States immigration service during a year of secret cam-

⁴Edmonton Journal, February 7, 1919.

⁵Edmonton Journal, February 10, 1919.

paigning in industrial centres of the Pacific coast. The majority of the prisoners will be sent back to Russian provinces. 6

Why Russia was to be the destination of the "agitators" was not revealed. According to their guards, the prisoners were mainly Norwegians, Swedes, and Finns.

In a subsequent Journal editorial entitled "The Deportation of Dangerous Aliens", the U.S. action was lauded on the grounds that, during a period of postwar reconstruction and economic dislocation, "...the professional trouble-maker flourishes."⁷ A subsequent editorial, while leaving open the question as to whether or not the Seattle strike was an attempted Bolshevist revolution instigated by the I.W.W., concluded that general strikes are "economically falacious."⁸

That a general strike would occur at Winnipeg in May was difficult to discern in the Journal. While strike action was possible among civic workers on May 1, 1919, which marked the start of the fiscal year for the Winnipeg civic administration, a Journal headline, "Winnipeg Thinks Possibility of Strike Remote", belied the actual situation.⁹ At the end of April, the paper revealed that "Winnipeg Looks For Big Strike on 1st Of May,"¹⁰ This May Day walkout did

⁶Ibid.

⁷Edmonton Journal, February 12, 1919.

⁸Edmonton Journal, February 15, 1919.

⁹Edmonton Journal, April 2, 1919.

¹⁰Edmonton Journal, April 30, 1919.

not ensue, but by May 10 the metal and building trades experienced a strike.¹¹ Two days later, an article only five column inches in size and buried on page six, reported that "Winnipeg Will Probably See General Strike." This report stated that, out of approximately 17,000 strike votes cast, only about 300 opposed a walkout in sympathy with the building and metal trades.¹² On May 14, another page six article indicated that [an] "Order Is Given In Winnipeg For General Strike", this strike being intended to enforce the principle of collective bargaining.¹³ Only on day one of the Winnipeg General Strike did the Winnipeg situation merit first page coverage, the paper announcing that "Twenty-Seven Thousand Union Men in Winnipeg Left Their Posts Today."¹⁴

The general strike occupied the front pages of the Edmonton press for most of the period which lasted until the end of June. While both dailies relied on similar wire services for their information, their headlining and emphasis varied. When the telegraphers voted to strike on May 16, these wire services were disrupted but the Journal utilized mailed dispatches. One such "Special to the Journal" indicated the biased nature of this form of news dissemination:

...[T]he guant spectre of hunger no longer
menaces any but those who have laid down their

¹¹Edmonton Journal, May 10, 1919.

¹²Edmonton Journal, May 12, 1919.

¹³Edmonton Journal, May 14, 1919.

¹⁴Edmonton Journal, May 15, 1919.

tools....

The policy of injuring the general citizen body, which is powerless to settle the issues involved, is one which...must be discredited in the eyes of the union men.

In a general way the situation...is regarded as a reflection of the world-wide unrest as a result of the high cost of living. That it came to a head here is due to the agitation of a number of Socialist leaders, among whom were some Bolsheviks of a distinctly dangerous type. 15

Another such letter gave prominence to the Citizens' Committee and its rejection of the claim by the Metal Trades Council that it was the bargaining agent for all affiliated union locals. The Citizens' Committee was stated to have endorsed the right of collective bargaining by individual trade unions, but "would not tolerate outsiders being parties to the negotiations." The federal Minister of Labor was reported to have supported the Committee's viewpoint.¹⁶

The Edmonton press stressed the inconvenience caused the "general citizenry" by the strikers. The Citizens' Committee, taking up the cudgels on behalf of this amorphous mass, was represented as a group of vigilant tribunes who articulated the sentiments of the great Winnipeg public. The Journal especially propagated the pronouncements of the Committee. Both papers, however, published advertisements paid for by the organization.

One full page advertisement was a plea from the "Citizens of Winnipeg to the Citizens of Edmonton" asking

¹⁵Edmonton Journal, May 24, 1919.

¹⁶Edmonton Journal, May 27, 1919.

for assistance in the formation of a "Country-wide organization to protect Canada." The notice stressed the extensive economic dislocation caused in Winnipeg and western Canada "[b]ecause three private firms in Winnipeg could not agree with their workers...." It was alleged that the ultimate objective of the strike was to place the city "and country under the administration of the Soviet government" The Committee predicted that general strike activity could continue into the summer and autumn, this being fomented by a "...sinister group of secret agents, who during the war were agents of German sedition in Canada and the United States." These future strikes would terminate distribution of food commodities and deny veterans their "post-war gratuities and deferred pay."

Thus a situation would be created where hungry, desperate men would be ripe for any trouble... and a social revolution could be carried out at a stroke. 17

The advertisement posed two basic choices facing Canadians: "the Russian Soviet form of government" and "the Red Flag of Revolution" or "the British Constitution" and "the Union Jack". It concluded with the plea that representatives of all existing Citizens' Committees correspond with the Winnipeg Citizens' Committee of One Thousand so that a national structure could be established.

That a revolution had erupted at Winnipeg was difficult to discern from Edmonton press coverage of the

¹⁷Edmonton Bulletin, June 10, 1919.

first phase of the strike. One of the earlier Bulletin reports stated that quiet and order predominated in the city:

The most noticeable features of out-door life on [the first and second days of the strike] has been the enormous number of automobiles on the streets and the predominance of men parading on the main thoroughfares of the city. 18

Violent occurrences were given extensive coverage by the press during the latter stages of the strike. On June 3, the Journal revealed on page one that "Disorderly Winnipeg Crowds Before Industrial Bureau Smash Autos and March On." An estimated crowd of three thousand was reported to have broken into the industrial bureau and then to have proceeded to raid the headquarters of the Citizens' Committee. "The mob," allegedly strikers and sympathizers, "tore the committee's sign from the building and carried it down the street triumphantly at the head of the parade."¹⁹ The Bulletin, too, emphasized the violent side of the general strike when it announced that "Returned Soldier Constables Attacked -- Strike Grip Breaks."

Serious clashes resulted from demonstrations by strike sympathizers against returned soldier constables this evening [June 10].

A large crowd gathered...with the main disturbance occurring at the corner of Portage avenue and Main, where strikers and sympathizers disarmed and assaulted individual special policemen.... Missiles were thrown by the crowd, the police retaliating [sic] by free use of their batons on the heads of the demonstrators. 20

¹⁸ Edmonton Bulletin, May 17, 1919.

¹⁹ Edmonton Journal, June 3, 1919.

²⁰ Edmonton Bulletin, June 11, 1919.

The violent confrontation between demonstrating strikers and the R.N.W.M.P., on June 21, was given lengthy coverage in the Bulletin under the headline "One Killed and About Fifty Wounded Is Total Casualty In Winnipeg Riot Saturday." The crowd, estimated to have comprised 20,000 strikers, sympathizers, returned soldiers, and women and children, was reported to have initially been orderly. However, after several minor altercations occurred, a single line of red-coated mounted police arrived.

A hundred yards behind this first rank came a second rank of khaki-clad horsemen, said by the crowd to be members of the Strathcona Horse and Fort Garry Horse, but afterwards stated by Alderman Gray to be Royal North-West policemen returned from the front to whom had not been issued the well-known scarlet tunic. 21

After the Bulletin described the arrival of the R.N.W.M.P. and "khaki-clad horsemen", it substituted the word "mob" for the term "crowd" which it had used earlier. One such confrontation between the police and the "passionate mob" was reported as follows:

...[I]t had now become a passionate mob, determined on teaching the military a lesson. From all roadways nearby bricks had been torn up and hurled at the backs of the horsemen.

The attitude of a member of the "mob", surprisingly articulate during such a melee, was indicated by a quotation:

"That is the end of them," remarked a striker. "We will now get on with the silent parade. They thought they could stop us, but we will show them

²¹Edmonton Bulletin, June 23, 1919.

who are the masters of the streets of Winnipeg."²² The man reported killed was Mike Sokolwoki, "registered alien", who was shot through the heart as he was crossing William Avenue at the time of one of the police charges. That violence of this nature occurred during a Canadian labor dispute might have surprised the Edmonton newspaper reader had he not been, during the preceding weeks, conditioned into accepting the violent proclivities of the Winnipeg strikers.

On May 22, the Journal gave page one coverage to an article announcing that "Industrial Unrest To Be Taken Up By Dominion Cabinet." Sir Robert Borden was scheduled to resume his leadership duties in Ottawa on May 26 after attending the Paris Peace Conference:

Sir Robert was a member of the peace conference and committee on labor, and is credited with having drafted the labor memorandum. He has advanced progressive ideas on the subject. ²³

These "advanced progressive ideas" were urgently needed, for a wave of general sympathetic strikes swept Canada after May 15. The Edmonton press, late in May, was studded with dispatches from Calgary, Saskatoon, Regina, Moose Jaw, Lethbridge, Vancouver, and Toronto, relating general strike agitation occurring in these centres.

The Unionist government utilized the Hon. Gideon Robertson as "trouble-shooter" during this critical period.

²²Ibid.

²³Edmonton Journal, May 22, 1919.

The Minister of Labor at first attempted to head off threatened sympathetic strikes by wiring officials of western Trades and Labor Councils the reassuring news that:

Progress is being made here [Winnipeg] and feel sure an adjustment can be reached and that sympathetic action on the part of trade unions in other cities is very undesirable from the standpoint of all interests and wholly unnecessary to a satisfactory adjustment of matters in dispute. 24

Robertson was in Winnipeg at this time, and his telegrams to the E.T. & L.C. and other Alberta trade union centres were forwarded by F. J. Harrison, dominion fair wage officer at Calgary. Mr. Harrison also released the news to Alberta newspapers that a settlement at Winnipeg was hoped for by Monday, May 26. This was the intended date for the commencement of the Edmonton sympathetic strike, and strike votes among local unionists were being taken at the time of Mr. Harrison's announcement. That the Journal article was published on May 23 was a possible attempt to influence the local labor vote.

The Bulletin reflected the supposed optimism being sounded by the federal government regarding labor unrest when it headed an article with [Borden] "Hopeful That Situation May Be Cleared Up" and "Premier Borden Thinks National Unrest Is Only Temporary Agitation."²⁵ Accompanying Borden's optimistic pronouncements were those from Gideon

²⁴Edmonton Journal, May 23, 1919.

²⁵Edmonton Bulletin, May 27, 1919.

Robertson to all who would listen that the Winnipeg strike was entitled to no sympathy or support. In a wire to Mayor Marshal of Calgary he revealed:

I have no hesitation in stating that the One Big Union movement is the underlying power of the whole trouble, and that the Winnipeg general strike deserves no sympathy or support from the labor organizations outside. 26

That Robertson realized that the O.B.U. secessionist movement was an assault against the American Federation of Labor's domination of the Canadian labor movement, and that the Winnipeg strike could very well be part of such an assault, was indicated by a page one article published by the Journal on May 30.

The gravity of the situation in Winnipeg today, and in fact, a condition pregnant with fateful meaning for possibly all Canada...is forecasted by a dispatch from Senator Robertson...to Samuel Gompers...appealing to the chief of the American Federation of Labor to give the subject his personal attention.... Robertson asserts, "The movement underlying the strike has for its purpose the destruction of the international union." 27

The arrest of Winnipeg strike leaders commenced on June 17 was given first page coverage by the Edmonton press. The Journal introduced this wave of arrests with the headline "Seditious Utterances Charge Against 9 Leaders of Strike."

Acting on authority from the federal government..., nine men whom secret service authorities had marked

²⁶Edmonton Journal, May 27, 1919.

²⁷Edmonton Journal, May 30, 1919.

down as spreaders of Bolshevik propaganda, were arrested this morning. 28

As the federal government dragnet widened, persons far afield from Winnipeg felt the forces of retribution descend upon them. Hence, W. A. Pritchard, travelling to the West Coast, was seized at Calgary on June 19 when his C.P.R. coach arrived there at 6:40 p.m.²⁹ The arrested, whose ranks increased daily, had charges of seditious libel and seditious conspiracy hurled against them.³⁰

The arrests evoked considerable editorial comment. The Bulletin, in an editorial entitled "'Direct Action' by Government", stated that the men arrested would get no sympathy from the public.

They set themselves up as dictators and frankly announced that their purpose was the overthrow of existing governmental organization and authority. Well, the government had taken up the challenge and the dictators whose latest decree, that the babies of Winnipeg should not get milk was still partially in force on Sunday last, are now in Stoney Mountain penitentiary....

The difficulty of the situation is that two wrongs do not make a right. "Direct Action" by a government is objectionable and as dangerous as "direct action" by the Bolshevik. 31

Several other editorials in the Bulletin imputed the same thing. The government had allowed the strike leaders to perpetrate their "treason" for weeks and, after allowing

²⁸Edmonton Journal, June 17, 1919.

²⁹Edmonton Journal, June 20, 1919.

³⁰Edmonton Bulletin, June 18, 1919.

³¹Edmonton Bulletin, June 17, 1919.

the situation to drift, summarily arrested the accused without following correct legal procedures. This violation of legal norms could be construed as being an infringement upon individual liberties and would, perhaps, enable the detainees to pose as martyrs. This would be a form of provocation which would further exacerbate industrial unrest.

The Journal soon rebutted the editorials of its rival. In an editorial entitled, "The 'Provocation' Cry", the Bulletin was mocked for its inconsistency. Oliver's paper had allegedly attacked the government most vociferously because it was not actively intervening in the Winnipeg situation. Yet, once the government did act, the Bulletin was "wailing" at the "provocation" directed against organized labor. While the Bulletin had every right to change its opinions as often as political expediency dictated, and while nothing less could be expected from that paper, it did not have the right to "misrepresent completely what [had] happened."³²

The trials of the Winnipeg strike leaders in July and August, 1919, were also reported at length. The correspondence of socialist leaders, and O.B.U. proponents, was submitted in evidence by the Crown to prove the existence of a "seditious conspiracy." While correspondence from persons living in Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary, and Winnipeg was introduced at the trials, letters and publications

³²Edmonton Journal, June, 20, 1919.

seized from the homes of Edmontonians are of particular interest. In Chapter IV, reference was made to these seizures which occurred early in the morning of July 1. Both Edmonton newspapers, relying upon the same dispatches, reported the citing of this documentation at the Winnipeg court session of July 31. The newspaper articles, when quoting excerpts from letters, indicated that lengthy passages from them were either not quoted at the trial or not included in the newspaper coverage. This taking of phrases out of context, a dubious practice at any time, certainly was bound to create prejudice within the minds of the newspaper reader. It is not surprising that frustrated socialists, denied political power and certain that "their day had come", would use rhetoric in private correspondence or conversation among themselves that would sound ebullient or even "extreme". That they planned to achieve certain results from the Western Labor Conference was obvious. That they engaged in behind-the-scenes manipulative strategy was equally obvious. That the trade union "establishment" engaged in similar manipulations has already been indicated in Part One of this thesis. The world of politics constantly sees such behind-the-scenes maneuvering which, while often unpalatable to those not initiated in the arts of political intrigue, is hardly "seditious conspiracy".

Corporal Albert Moss of the R.N.W.M.P. searched the home and office of Carl Berg and produced at the trial letters and literature seized. The titles of these books,

which probably came from the homes of all Edmontonians raided (although the newspaper report did not make this clear), ranged from the whimsical to the very "radical" (from the point-of-view of a Unionist living in 1919). J. B. Coyne, crown prosecutor, pointed out that "a large quantity" of the literature seized was still under ban. "The Right to Be Lazy" was one of the more whimsical titles cited, whereas "Lessons of the Russian Revolution" by "Nicholas Lenine [sic]" probably evoked horror from staunch Tories in 1919. "On Whose Side Are You, Worker or Capitalist" was a title which could very well be that imprinted on the cover page of a pamphlet produced by a more militant wing of the British Labor Party. Some of the publications cited were obviously public relations literature extolling the Soviet regime.³³ Considering the type of press coverage given the Russian Revolution in 1918 and 1919, surely a small attempt to provide "equal time" to the Soviet viewpoint could not be condemned by an objective person.

One letter addressed to J. R. Knight, written on November 29, 1918 and closed by the phrase "Yours in revolt, R. B. Russell", was entered as evidence. With regard to the Western Labor Conference, Russell was cited as writing that "...we would pack it with reds and no doubt start something."³⁴ Another letter, claimed to have been written by

³³Edmonton Bulletin, August 1, 1919.

³⁴Ibid.

John F. Maguire, an "official of the socialist party of Canada" who was residing with Joe Knight on July 1, was dated January 13, 1919. Describing the 1919 convention of the Alberta Federation of Labor, Maguire stated that "we gave the Bolsheviki the finest boost that has been accomplished for some time." When the western conference came up for discussion at the A.F. of L. convention, "we carried that against the wishes of the machine." Maguire stated that "We must plan to have a bumper meeting when we all are in Calgary and then surely this is one place that we can paint red." A letter from Joe Knight supposedly revealed how he considered unemployment as being "...the most glorious opportunity to show the 'plug' the only solution...is by continually pointing to him (as you say) the situation in Russia."³⁵

The Edmonton Sympathetic Strike as Viewed by the Press

As the strike was discussed in Chapter IV, many of the specific details of this short sympathetic strike will be omitted and attention will be paid to journalistic and public attitudes toward the event. The Edmonton Journal refused to acknowledge the likelihood of an Edmonton strike, and news articles as well as editorials indicated its dubiousness. One such article, headlined "Edmonton Labor Man to Take Strike Vote on Sunday Afternoon", stated:

³⁵Ibid.

That the fever of unrest which seems to be spreading throughout the length and breadth of the dominion is felt in this city has been evident for sometime, although conditions here are by no means such as to warrant such drastic action as the strike. 36

The Bulletin was not sanguine. On May 23, in a page one article entitled, "Union Officials Are Of Opinion Strike Coming," the consensus among Edmonton local officials that rank and file unionists favored a sympathetic strike was reported. In anticipation of such a strike, Alderman Milton Martin suggested that a special meeting of City Council be called on the evening of May 23, and this suggestion was implemented. Alderman Martin acknowledged that this meeting could not prevent a strike in Edmonton, but that it could perhaps apply pressure upon the federal government to expedite a settlement at Winnipeg. Invited to the meeting were employers and employees as well as trade union officials.³⁷

The Bulletin article stressed the attempts at conciliation being made by the mayor and aldermen. The Journal, perhaps attempting to intimidate trade unionists, headlined its coverage of the special council meeting with "Military Officers To Be Present At Special Meeting of Council" and "Some Definite Action May Be Taken to Try and Avert Strike in Edmonton."

Word came to the city commissioners on Friday morning that military officers will be present at

³⁶Edmonton Journal, May 22, 1919.

³⁷Edmonton Bulletin, May 23, 1919.

the council meeting. Brig. Gen. H. F. MacDonald, G.O.C. at Calgary, has instructed Major Miller of Calgary to attend.... 38

The Journal also revealed that Supt. Wroughton of the R.N.W.M.P. conferred with Mayor Clarke on May 22, the strike situation allegedly the topic under discussion.

The results of the May 23 meeting were indicated in the Bulletin under the heading "Council Sure City Labor Is To Be Trusted." The article indicated that Mayor Clarke believed that the unions would vote 85 to 90% in favor of a strike. Reverend F. E. Mercer also suggested that a sympathetic strike was likely, and that the City Council had better prepare for this probability. The Mayor added to the discussion by asking, rhetorically,

...if it were not true that the whole trouble rested upon the swollen profiteers from the war, who would not recognize the unions because they were tickled to death to get the chance to lock out the men. They had made so much money during the war, and they were now overstocked. 39

The lawyer, Alderman Grant, pointed out that existing agreements would not permit unions to strike. Also, the Edmonton labor movement was dominated by "...a body of men to whose efforts it was due that, more than any other city, Edmonton had been free from strikes." A resolution, moved by Ald. Grant and seconded by Ald. Esdale, was passed unanimously by the Council:

³⁸ Edmonton Journal, May 23, 1919.

³⁹ Edmonton Bulletin, May 24, 1919.

That this council has continued confidence in the men at the head of affairs of the Trades and Labor Council and believes that they will do their utmost to avert any strike in this city. 40

At the end of this remarkably optimistic gathering, the Council resolved to meet again on Monday, May 26.

The morning Bulletin headline on May 26 was "Labor Unions Vote Three to One for Walk out -- Definite Order of Strike to Develop." As the paper was printed prior to the hour scheduled for the strike, it was able to publish on day one of the walk out. For subsequent editions, it had to rely on gasoline engines to operate its presses until electric power could again be utilized. The paper published a notice informing its readership, on May 26, that the three unions into which the Bulletin printers were organized had no disagreement with the paper, but curtailment of production could possibly ensue because of "outside pressure unjustly and unwarrantably exercised upon the employees."⁴¹ The newspaper gave voluminous coverage to the strike and, almost daily, published a column on "The Local Strike Situation Today".

Unlike the Bulletin, the Journal could not publish an edition on May 26. On May 27, its headline above its strike coverage was "Civic Conditions Nearing Normal" followed by subheadlines such as "Citizen's Are Organizing to

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Edmonton Bulletin, May 26, 1919.

Provide Auto Service" and "All Stores Are Open Doing Usual Business, City Power Resumed."⁴² The Journal, on May 27, copied its competitor by publishing a column, "The Strike Today." It soon ceased this practice since, after the first week elapsed, it was convinced that this was not a "real general strike" and said so in its editorial columns.

Editorial opinion regarding the strike was essentially the same in both Edmonton dailies. A typical Bulletin editorial was subtitled, "The Right to Live" and stated:

Self preservation is the first law of nature.... The right of self defence -- except as against duly constituted authority -- is inherent and inalienable; without distinction as between man and man, or between class and class. 43

The editorial went on to describe how the Winnipeg Citizens' Committee was necessary as a self defence measure when the operation of utilities was interfered with by the strike committee. The efforts of the former committee led to a restoration of such essential utilities as water service. In the case of Edmonton, the citizens were entitled to a complete enjoyment of their utilities and should City Council be unable to ensure this, it had best "...vacate office, and let responsible citizens have a free hand in protecting themselves." That this advocacy of vigilante committees contradicted the Bulletin's professed concern for obedience to "duly constituted authority" did not seem to occur to the

⁴²Edmonton Journal, May 27, 1919.

⁴³Edmonton Bulletin, May 26, 1919.

editorialist.

The Journal wrote editorials of a less belligerent mien. One maintained that general strikes were detrimental to the community and to the cause of organized labor. They could not possibly achieve their professed objectives.

It was because it seemed so clear that the calling of a sympathetic strike here would be so senseless a proceeding and so calculated to impair the position of great strength which organized labor had won for itself that The Journal refused, until the very hour of the declaration of the strike, to believe that it would actually be brought into effect. 44

The professed surprise of the Journal that a sympathetic strike would ensue was, of course, fatuous. All indicators after the May 19 meeting of the E.T. & L.C. signified the occurrence of a strike, and the Journal's own labor columnist, F. E. Mercer, could have confirmed this.

The vigilante action which the Bulletin sought did not occur. That such action was necessary may have occurred to the paper's readers when spotting the headline "SOVIET GOVT. IN EDMONTON". This misleading heading was placed over the article summarizing the contents of the first special strike edition of the Edmonton Free Press. One typical quote from the Free Press, cited by the Bulletin, was:

The Police association voted by an overwhelming majority to walk out, and that organization stands ready to act at the call of the committee.

Edmonton firemen are out. However, for the protection of life and property the strike commit-

⁴⁴Edmonton Journal, May 27, 1919.

tee is instructing the firemen to return to the fire halls and stand by as usual. 45

Stripped of all braggadocio, the Free Press article implied that the Edmonton strike committee had no intention of involving key civic employees, necessary for the safety and protection of Edmontonians, in the strike. In spite of this, the Bulletin gave page one coverage, in its May 27 edition, to a short article entitled "Citizens Committee May Be Formed To Defend Themselves." Such a committee was formed as the Journal indicated in its headline "Citizens Organize Protective Assoc. Against The Strike" and "Will Support City Council in Efforts to Maintain the Necessary Public Utility Service and To Assist Those Engaged in Essential Industries." The committee met daily in the Macdonald Hotel with S. B. Woods appointed as its chairman. At its meeting on May 28, Alderman C. Grant reported that all utilities were running, except the street cars, this revelation contradicting the heading over the article which implied that City Council needed "support" to maintain the utility services.⁴⁶

That the Citizens' Committee did not flourish was a reflection of the fact that the strike was obviously dying by attrition after the first week. Several craft unions did not support the strike from its inception. The Bulletin flaunted this fact in an article headed by "Several Unions

⁴⁵Edmonton Bulletin, May 27, 1919.

⁴⁶Edmonton Journal, May 28, 1919.

Voting Against General Strike." The headline was misleading since some unions cited did not vote, one example being the Typographers' union which justified its nonparticipation on the grounds that it did not "...have the powers to declare a strike under the circumstances without a direct order from the international union."⁴⁷ Civic employees were back at work by the end of the first week of the walkout. Most "international" unions refused to sanction a walk out as a Bulletin headline on May 29 signified: "Railway Tie-up Is Improbable; International Order To The Local Unions Forbid Strike." While these "international" orders were often ignored by Edmonton railway employees, they were nevertheless of importance in that they denied strike funds to those engaged in an unauthorized walk out.

The Edmonton strikers, many of whom were not supported by their union leadership, had their morale shattered by the attacks upon them from the press. The Edmonton Free Press, in an editorial in its May 31 edition, urged an end to the strike. Their editorial, cited in Chapter IV above, was given great prominence by the daily press. The Bulletin, prior to the receipt of mailed copies of the Free Press by many subscribers, quoted the editorial under the headline "Official Organ of Strike Says Union Labor Should Return." The Journal also publicised this editorial prior to the

⁴⁷Edmonton Bulletin, May 24, 1919.

official release date of the labor newspaper.⁴⁸

The relationship between the strike committee and the City Council was kept on a fairly civil basis. Many persons prominent in the E.T. & L.C. establishment opposed the strike, and were only too happy to see it disintegrate. Mayor Clarke wanted the strike to end but also wanted the support of organized labor for the 1919 mayoralty contest. His tightrope performance, described in Chapter IV, was one which involved the cajoling of unionists, especially civic employees, into returning to work without appearing anti-labor. As many civic employees were only too anxious to return to work, and supported the strike mainly because of the prevailing sentiment within other unions, it was not too difficult to induce the employees to resume their jobs after a short, ritualized, walkout had transpired. During the first week of the strike, when city utilities were either operated at less than capacity or shut-down, the mayor was harassed by aldermen who wanted stern measures taken to end the strike.

The City Council consisted of aldermen who had varying degrees of sympathy, or antagonism, toward the strikers. The firemen's strike of 1918 was very much on the minds of the aldermen dealing with the 1919 sympathetic strike. J. Kinny, of course, championed labor's cause. J. J. McKenzie who, while in the implement business in the

⁴⁸Edmonton Bulletin, May 30, 1919 and Edmonton Journal, May 29, 1919.

south side, was a D.L.P. nominee in December, 1918 and hence refrained from belligerent utterances against organized labor.⁴⁹ C. H. Grant's victory in 1918 was due, in part, to his support of the striking firemen.⁵⁰ During the 1919 strike, Grant, chairman of the safety and health committee of City Council, opposed labor's action and spoke at a meeting of the short-lived Edmonton Citizens' Committee. Not having to contest the December, 1919 election, he assumed a tough stance toward the unionists. At a meeting of a special committee of City Council on the evening of Monday, Mar 26, Ald. McCoppen "warned the committee to remember the firemen's strike."

Ald. Milton Martin said that at the time the public were behind the firemen, but now the public were not behind the strikers.

The question was asked how this was known and Ald. Grant said he had been out in the town all day and if they advertised a citizen meeting for that night there would be 5,000 present. ⁵¹

Other "hard-liners" regarding the strikers included O. Bush, M. Esdale, and W. W. Prevey. Ald. S. J. McCoppen, an undertaker, tended to be a "soft-liner." He supported the firemen during their 1918 strike. The other aldermen vacillated, not wanting to incur the wrath of working-class voters during future elections.

The safety and health committee had four extra

⁴⁹ See Chapter VI above.

⁵⁰ Edmonton Journal, December 4, 1918.

⁵¹ Edmonton Bulletin, May 27, 1919.

members added to deal with the strike emergency. The expanded committee was divided between "hard-liners" (Grant, Esdale, and Bush) and "soft-liners" (Kinney and McCoppen). Aldermen A. McLennan and C. Hepburn were "middle-of-the-roads" although Hepburn was not unsympathetic to the labor viewpoint. The committee notified the police commission that it would be provided with sufficient funds "...to meet any requirements...in order to maintain law and order...."⁵² The mayor was not as sympathetic to the needs of the police commission as the aldermanic committee, stating that "...he was not going to have the police commission interfering with his authority or over-ruling his prerogatives or he would place the city under martial law."⁵³

Considering the fact that the police supported the strike, there was little possibility that they would be hurled against the strikers. Chief Hill had contingency plans to secure assistance from the R.N.W.M.P. should the situation warrant it. In addition, extra precautions at the Police Station were taken, although these were not as drastic as local rumor made them seem. Nevertheless, the activities of Chief Hill and the police commission incensed Mayor Clarke:

Mayor Clarke complained against what he indicated as improper action by the police. It had been

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Ibid.

reported by a strike committee that there were 200 rounds of ammunition at the police station, with special constables arranged as well as a cook. 54

While the efforts of city councillors and the mayor to restore the full functioning of the utilities were varied, and hence will not be examined here in their totality, the street railway situation will be examined, as it displayed those differences of attitude among aldermen discussed above. On May 26 the street railway ceased to function and, on May 30, full street car service resumed. Pressures were exerted against the streetrailwaymen by the press; the Bulletin, for example, emphasized the harm done to school children by the strike:

An appeal is being made by school board officials to the strike committee for resumption of the street car service, owing to the trouble that is being experienced by the children and teachers in getting to school. Perhaps the worse off are the high school students.... 55

On the afternoon of May 26, the special committee appointed by City Council to deal with the strike situation (the expanded version of the safety and health committee) met, with the utilities situation being the chief topic of discussion. In the evening of that Monday, this committee met with a delegation from the central strike committee. The Edmonton press clearly indicated the attitudes of specific members of City Council to the strikers in general, and the

⁵⁴Edmonton Journal, May 27, 1919.

⁵⁵Edmonton Bulletin, May 28, 1919.

street railway shutdown in particular. The following summarizes statements made at these two meetings:

Mayor Clarke vs. C. Grant -- The mayor argued that the city should go to the strikers asking for men to operate the utilities. Ald. Grant argued that if the men would not work other men should be hired to fill their places.

Ald. C. Hepburn -- Hepburn believed that the local strike would not last long and it developed only as an expression of sympathy with the Winnipeg strikers. The Edmonton strikers wanted action from the federal government.

Ald. S. McCoppen -- McCoppen stated that a meeting should be held with a delegation from the strikers.

Ald. M. Esdale -- Esdale objected to the strike, stating that the city had done nothing to antagonize the trade unionists.

Ald. O. Bush -- Regarding the Mayor's telegrams to the government at Ottawa, Bush condemned this interference as the federal authorities were fully aware of the situation at Winnipeg.

Mayor Clarke -- As the unions were not asking for very much, he believed that the dominion government should not be allowed to flout organized labor.

Ald. C. Grant -- (during the evening meeting with the strike representatives) Grant asserted to the representatives that their objectives had been obtained and little was to be gained from a prolongation of the strike.

Ald. M. Esdale -- He asserted that the street cars would

have to be started.

Ald. S. McCoppen -- McCoppen advocated a partial street car service.

Ald. M. Martin -- Martin proposed to the unions that a limited street railway service be allowed. He opposed the use of strikebreakers, but advocated that employees who would work be allowed to do so.

Ald. McCoppen -- McCoppen proposed that the strike committee allow a limited street car service in exchange for a concession by council which would send a wire to Ottawa in support of the Winnipeg strikers.

Ald. A. McLennan -- He supported a limited street car service.

Mayor Clarke -- Clarke told the labor delegation, "Well, I think you would have been a bunch of suckers if you had not struck and a bunch of suckers if you came back."⁵⁶

On May 28, W. Marshall, chairman of the publicity sub-committee of the strike central committee, announced that a curtailed street car service be allowed. The reason for this recommendation was purportedly a concern for school children who had a lengthy distance to travel to school.⁵⁷ However, on the morning of May 28, city commissioners issued orders to the superintendents of the utilities asking them to accept applications from job-seekers in order that full

⁵⁶Compiled from the Edmonton Journal and Bulletin, May 27, 1919.

⁵⁷Edmonton Journal, May 28, 1919.

utility service might be established. This threat to hire strikebreakers probably spurred civic employees into reconsidering their action. Advertisements appeared in the Edmonton papers asking for applications, one such notice appearing in the Edmonton Journal on May 30 on behalf of five civic departments. The advertisements ceased when all civic unions agreed to end their strike.

Organized labor, while not dealt harshly by City Council due to the efforts of the Mayor and "soft-liners" among the aldermen, was not happy with those various pressures exerted upon civic employees during the first week of the strike. It was resolved to reward its friends and to punish its enemies. The March, 1918 plebiscite over the firemen's strike and the December, 1918 civic election revealed to Edmonton workers their political strength. Hence, the Dominion Labor Party vigorously contested the December, 1919 election campaign and its endorsed candidates fared well during the balloting.

Two "hard-liners" during the Edmonton sympathetic strike, O. Bush and W. Prevey, declined to enter the 1919 aldermanic campaign. Mayor Clarke, while sympathetic to organized labor during the strike, had a measure of difficulty in gaining labor's whole-hearted support for the 1919 mayoralty campaign. As mayor, he had to make many compromises with Edmonton's business interests during his first term of office. On the other hand, he could not win re-election without the endorsement of the D.L.P. He there-

fore was hesitant about seeking office again, and only did so when the D.L.P. threw its support behind him. His opponent in the mayoralty campaign was M. Esdale, a "hard-liner" during the Edmonton sympathetic strike.

Both Edmonton newspapers supported Alderman Esdale during the campaign. Typically, the Bulletin was more virulent in its condemnation of Joseph Clarke and his D.L.P. allies. The election of Monday, December 8, was preceded by massive editorial attacks on the mayor and laborites. The O.B.U. and the Edmonton sympathetic strike were major issues in the election campaign and the Bulletin's fulminations in its editorial columns. In an editorial entitled "Progressive Citizenship Or Class War," the Bulletin asserted:

J. W. Findley [D.L.P. aldermanic candidate] was chairman of the strike committee in May last. In conjunction with Carl Berg he shut the power, stopped the streetcars;...called out the civic employees...and generally tore the town to pieces for the greater part of a month.... He is s thor- oughly representative candidate of the Dominion Labor Party. 58

The same editorial asserted the Dominion Labor Party represented "class war". While the D.L.P. was a political attempt to perpetuate the ideal of "proletarian dictatorship", the O.B.U. was an attempt within industry to achieve the same goal.

Class war is what the party stood for in Winnipeg in May and June last, and in Edmonton for a part

⁵⁸Edmonton Bulletin, December 5, 1919.

of the same period. ...That was the issue in the recent Winnipeg civic elections and it is the chief issue in the Edmonton elections. 59

The editorial columns of the Edmonton Bulletin on December 6 carried redbaiting to an extreme. One editorial equated the Dominion Labor Party slate, the O.B.U., the Edmonton Sympathetic Strike, and Carl Berg with the Bolsheviks and "Moscow gold". This editorial entitled "Where The Money Came From," commenced with an excerpt from a letter mailed by Carl Berg to R. B. Russell and dated June 20, 1919. This quotation was cited at Russell's trial at Winnipeg for "seditious conspiracy", and stated "I have just got in a shipment of Bolshevik funds." This short quotation, taken out of context from Berg's letter, was obviously a facetious reference to a donation of \$250 sent by a miners' union to the Provincial Committee of the O.B.U. This money, apparently, was to finance a trip to Edmonton by Russell in order to induce local railroaders to support the sympathetic strike which, as of June 20, was a dying cause. However, the Bulletin was able to conclude:

This should settle beyond argument the position of the Dominion Labor party in Edmonton, and also clears up the question as to how the Edmonton "sympathetic strike" was financed. It was not a strike for higher wages or better conditions. Its purpose was purely revolutionary.... It did not have the financial support of the international unions. And yet it did not lack money. If Mr. Berg got in Bolshevik funds with which to push propaganda among the railway men, it is safe to

⁵⁹Ibid.

say that the funds that financed the strike came from the same source. 60

A second Bulletin editorial on December 6 was entitled "Conspiracy Against the Public." It commented favorably on a speech made by mayoralty candidate, Esdale, on December 3, 1919. Esdale alleged that the Edmonton strike committee, including Carl Berg and J. Findlay, attempted to make a deal with the Grand Trunk Pacific R.R. whereby the railway would be allowed to operate provided it would terminate coal deliveries to Edmonton. This supposed offer would have led to the closing down of Edmonton utilities. This contradicted Bolshevik principles stated the Bulletin, for private capitalists were being assisted at the expense of the public utilities. The editorial continued:

It was not to benefit the public at the expense of private capitalists that Karl [sic] and his associates were aiming when they tried to lay the city under siege with the able assistance of his Worship the Mayor, but the establishment of themselves as masters of the city. 61

Adjectives are difficult to select to describe the above utterances of the Bulletin. The Journal, too, opposed Clarke but was able to constrain itself when criticising Clarke and the D.L.P. slate. Both papers failed in their objective of defeating Clarke and the laborites for, on December 9, the Bulletin was obliged to report the substantial gains experienced by labor at the polls. J. Clarke had

⁶⁰Edmonton Bulletin, December 6, 1919.

⁶¹Ibid.

defeated M. Esdale by a vote of 6,509 to 4,427. Three out of five aldermen elected were D.L.P. nominees. All four victorious school trustees were endorsed by Labor.⁶² The Bulletin attributed the victory of Clarke and his D.L.P. allies to the vigorous efforts of the laborites to get the names of their supporters on the voters' lists. In an editorial entitled "The 'Reds' Win", the Bulletin ruefully stated:

The old gang of 1914, Clarke, East, Sheppard and Kinney, are on the job again. Apparently the bourgeoisie who helped to elect East, Sheppard and Kinney balked at Findlay and Murray, for which the city has cause to be thankful. ⁶³

The 1919 civic elections demonstrated that the image of organized labor was not tarnished irredeemably after the Edmonton sympathetic strike terminated. The strike, more of a "labor demonstration" protesting post-war prices and unemployment, than a significant general labor walkout, was constrained by the trade union establishment of the E.T. & L.C. This same establishment backed the D.L.P. electoral coup in 1919 so that it might influence considerably the actions of City Council in 1920. The O.B.U. disintegrated during 1920 in Edmonton, and the "international"

⁶²Edmonton Bulletin, December 9, 1919.

The vote indicated for Clarke was incomplete, for two polls had not reported as of December 9, 1919, when the Bulletin was printed. This fact had, of course, no bearing on the outcome of the mayoralty or aldermanic campaigns.

⁶³Ibid.

craft unions retained their supremacy over organized labor in the city. That organized labor was able to exert a considerable political influence in Edmonton may have undermined the O.B.U.'s attempts to effect social change through "direct action" strategies. However, returning soldiers, adding to the labor pool in Edmonton, made it difficult for unorganized workers to be unionized. Many returned soldiers shunned involvement in labor unions, the image of labor having been tainted due to the utterances of its more militant spokesmen. The press gave trade unionism a "disloyal" or "red" aura even though many union locals were dominated by staid upholders of conservative craft unionism. This image was undeserved, but citizens in post-war Canada were still gripped with patriotic fervor. Ironically, the O.B.U., a manifestation of trade union nationalism and an experiment in industrial unionism, was no more controlled by "foreign" influences than the skilled craft unions which were dominated by the American Federation of Labor. Yet, the skilled crafts were able to survive at a time when a surplus of manpower weakened the survival capacity of trade union structures, such as the O.B.U., comprised of the unskilled laborer.

Chapter X

CONCLUSION

The history of trade unionism in Edmonton and district has been examined in two ways. In Part One, the early history of trade unionism in the Edmonton area, culminating in the tumultuous years of 1918 and 1919, has been studied. Using secondary sources of a more or less objective nature, and by using a broad spectrum of more partisan labor newspapers and documentation, an attempt has been made to accurately indicate those social forces, demographic trends, ideological tendencies, institutions and personalities which shaped the course of events leading up to the strikes of 1918 and 1919, and the formation of the One Big Union secessionist movement. While additional research will undoubtedly enrich the labor history of the period in question, we have derived a fairly reliable account of the pre-1920 period.

Part Two, a newspaper analysis of the 1918-1919 period, cannot totally escape the bias inherent in the sources used. The owners and editors of the two papers involved were proponents of distinct political ideologies and reflected the interests of socio-economic groupings existing in the Edmonton region. The newspapers possessed definite editorial policies, and these did not result in biased editorial columns only. Headlining of articles, length of articles, page placement of news items, accuracy of report-

ing, use of propaganda techniques, selection of items for publication, and use of pejorative or eulogistic labels were some of the methods used to reflect editorial bias within the Journal and Bulletin. In addition to deliberate bias, human error and selective perception on the part of reporters, sources of information, and typographers also distorted the news disseminated.

There was an active interrelationship between the publishers of Edmonton's dailies and their readership. While the editors and publishers were anxious to influence the opinions of the reading public, they could not ignore the interests, prejudices, and wants of the readership. "Conventional wisdom" and popular feeling had to be pandered to. What a newspaper reported was not solely what its editor wanted disseminated, but also what the reading public wanted to "hear". This "public", in Edmonton and district, tended to possess petit bourgeois values. Farmers, merchants, many professionals, self-employed craftsmen, and entrepreneurs of various types possessed these values. While Edmonton possessed its socio-economic elite, there was no large body of very wealthy persons living in the city. The poor and unemployed existed, but their despair was often dissipated by the supposition that, in a land of opportunity such as western Canada, ambition, hard work, and a measure of "luck" would lead to better circumstances. In such a milieu organized labor functioned, and in such a milieu not many would believe that trade union organization offered long-term

advantages to the overworked and underpaid.

While the numerical strength of organized labor was limited, while only a minority of wage earners were unionized, the fact that workers were organized into such bodies gave them a collective strength which "two-fisted individualism" and "luck and pluck" could not have achieved. The trade union became an instrument which enabled a relatively small number of workers to achieve economic and political gains which were impressive in the Edmonton region. The newspapers could not ignore the activities of trade unionists, for their collective impact within Edmonton industry and politics was too great. The press, therefore, had to adopt stances toward trade unionism and decide upon the type of image to extend organized labor. On the other hand, leaders within the labor movement were also interested in the question of "image", and strove to have presented within the daily press that image which was most useful to its aims and aspirations.

Part One has outlined the growth of trade union structures in Edmonton prior to, and during, World War One. The spectacular growth of the city for the two decades following 1901 involved the importation of skilled craftsmen for construction purposes, and this resulted in the formation of union locals pertaining to the building trades. Many of these skilled artisans were from a British background, and were products of the British trade unionist tradition. The penetration of the railways into Edmonton saw the union-

ization of railway employees, starting with the more skilled, and followed by the less skilled, occupational categories. Primary and some secondary industry enabled further trade union organization. This was achieved mainly by "international" unions which possessed the experience and organizational skills necessary for such undertakings, and the majority of Edmonton union locals were affiliated to the E.T. & L.C., the Alberta Federation of Labor, the T.L.C. of Canada, and the American Federation of Labor.

The unions that existed in Edmonton prior to World War I were conservative. They excluded the majority of workers who were therefore denied the benefits of trade union membership. Businesses, whether Edmonton based or branches of larger corporate structures, had a vested interest in the containing of trade union growth. While they had difficulty in resisting the unionization of workers possessing esoteric skills and knowledge, they could often thwart union organization among semiskilled and unskilled workers. Until 1914, waves of immigration into Alberta insured the existence of pools of surplus labor which undermined the efforts of unions to organize in various industries. Many workers, from the British Isles as well as from continental Europe, appreciated the value of trade union membership, but various factors resulted in their exclusion from the ranks of organized labor.

During World War I, a premium was placed upon manpower due to the large numbers of Canadians who volunteered

for service overseas. These volunteers tended to be, on the whole, of Anglo-Celtic stock and often fairly recent arrivals from Great Britain. Immigrants from Central Europe could hardly be expected to be enthusiastic about enlistment in a crusade against "The Hun" and the allies of Germany. Their willingness to work in mines and on railroads in the Edmonton area was due partly to economic necessity and partly to the fact that they had gained experience in these occupations prior to their arrival in Canada. Working long hours at hard labor during the war, they naturally supported attempts to unionize industries that had previously been wholly, or partially, unorganized. War time inflation gave impetus to trade union organization as did the long hours necessitated by war time production. During World War I, the majority of unionized workers were not "aliens", but these new Canadians rightfully benefited from gains achieved through trade union expansion.

The latter years of the war saw increased strike activity in the mines and on the railways. These strikes often resulted in considerable wage gains as the effected industries were essential to the successful maintenance of the war effort. The adaptation of the U.S. McAdoo awards to Canada was one example of how the war enabled unionized workers to exact gains previously denied them. Yet, the termination of the war, and the return of thousands of veterans to the Edmonton area, saw the flooding of the labor market and the elimination of many of those gains achieved

during the preceding period.

The One Big Union concept was an effort to organize all wage-earners within one trade union structure. Some of its proponents saw it as a means of mobilizing the entire working class against capitalism. Others saw it as a means of achieving industrial unionism, while others saw it as a way of terminating the grip the American Federation of Labor had on Canadian labor structures. Many considered it as a vehicle of protest against postwar unemployment and inflation. Some radicals envisaged the O.B.U. as a means of achieving socialism through revolutionary action. The latter category, however, was very limited in Edmonton and district, and it is nonsensical to allege that those hundreds of workers who took the effort to secure membership in the O.B.U. were brainless dupes of radical socialists representing "foreign" interests.

The examination of the Edmonton press during the 1918-1919 period revealed the extent to which political dissent and trade union militancy was considered disloyal. With an Orwellian precision, "The Hun" was replaced by "The Bolsheviki" as the archenemy of Canada in the Edmonton press. Until the Armistice, those in the mines and on the railways who were affected by the Wartime Elections Act, the "aliens", received a "bad press" indeed. That industrial unionism spread within those basic industries, and consequently benefited non-Anglo-Celtic workers, enabled the press to disparage industrial unionism and its proponents. The

Edmonton Journal tended to stress the "alien" element more than the Bulletin, the latter being influenced by Frank Oliver who suffered politically as a result of the Conscription issue and the disenfranchisement of those of "enemy alien" birth.

The year 1919 saw the rise of the general strike movement and the O.B.U. While the Winnipeg general strike was essentially an attempt to establish collective bargaining rights for the Metal Trades Council, it was conceived by labor militants as a means of terminating the grip of the American Federation of Labor over Canadian labor unionism as well as being a means of propagating the O.B.U. concepts and perhaps, in addition, furthering the socialist cause. The militants were not a monolithic body, and it was fallacious to have labelled them as being all "reds", "revolutionaries", or anything else. This was, however, what the Edmonton press did. This blanket generalizing applied also to the Edmonton sympathetic strike which was basically an attempt to express solidarity with the Winnipeg strikers. The Edmonton strike, controlled by "moderate" trade unionists who were either members of conservative Canadian unions or "international" craft unions, was essentially a demonstration of labor's strength. O.B.U. proponents in the Edmonton strike committee thought otherwise, but they were contained through the efforts of the E.T. & L.C. establishment.

Of the central labor bodies in the cities of western Canada, the E.T. & L.C. was unique in several ways.

While the central labor councils at Winnipeg, Calgary, and Vancouver were temporarily under the control of O.B.U. proponents, and it took extensive organizational efforts to wrest this control away from the militants and secessionists on the part of the "international" unions, the E.T. & L.C. was never controlled by secessionists. The "purge" of April 21, 1919, saw to that. Hence, at the time of the general strikes of May and June, 1919, the E.T. & L.C., of all major trade union centres in western Canada, was under the domination of upholders of conservative unionism. That Edmonton was a "safe" city as far as the American Federation of Labor was concerned was evidenced by the fact that Alfred Farmilo, a pivotal figure on the Council's executive, could be spared for organizational efforts in Calgary and cities in British Columbia.

The Edmonton "loyalists", favoring political action through the Dominion Labor Party, were able to achieve notable successes during the civic elections of 1918 and 1919. Having allies on City Council, they were able to exact a large measure of toleration from the civic administration during the last week of May, 1919. Hence, no harsh retribution descended upon organized labor as an aftermath of the strike, and most conservative craft unions emerged from the conflict weakened but intact. The press, however, was extremely hostile to the strikers. Much of this hostility, in the form of "redbaiting", was hurled against Carl Berg and the Edmonton O.B.U. Some of it was deflected upon

the trade union establishment and the Dominion Labor Party.

Manifestations of labor unrest in 1919 were unjustly labelled as being Bolshevist or radical by the Edmonton press. The realities of postwar unemployment and inflation were underemphasized by these papers, especially by the Journal and its apologists for the Unionist regime. That the Journal, with its business orientation, would stress the allegedly revolutionary nature of the O.B.U. and the general strike movement was to be expected. It was consistent in its attack upon labor militancy and its praise of "labor statesmanship". The Bulletin, with its vacillating editorial policy, wavered from a benign toleration of trade union activity to extreme vituperation as occurred during the civic election of December, 1919. From neither paper could consistently accurate comment about trade union activity be expected.

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Appendix # 1Distribution of Alberta Population in Rural and
Urban Communities: 1901 -1921

	<u>1921</u>	<u>1916</u>	<u>1911</u>	<u>1906</u>	<u>1901</u>
Rural	365,550	307,776	232,726	127,379	54,033
Urban	222,904	188,749	141,937	58,033	18,989
	<u>588,454</u>	<u>496,525</u>	<u>374,663</u>	<u>185,412</u>	<u>73,022</u>
% Rural	62.1*	61.9	62.1	68.6	73.9
% Urban	37.9	38.1	37.9	31.4	26.1

*Error in Source corrected.

Source:

John Blue, Alberta Past and Present, Vol. 1,
Historical and Biographical (Chicago: Pioneer Historical
Publishing Co., 1924), P. 221.

Appendix # 2Birthplace of the People of Alberta

	<u>1916</u>	<u>1921</u>
Total population	496,525	588,454
Canada	241,357	315,090
British Isles	86,699	97,505
British Possessions	1,483	1,847
United States	91,674	99,879
Europe	71,580	69,765
Asia	3,042	3,975
Other Countries	-----	389

Source:

John Blue, Alberta Past and Present, Vol. 1, Historical and Biographical (Chicago: Pioneer Historical Publishing Co., 1924), p. 218.

Appendix # 3Prices and Price Indexes in Canada: 1914 - 1925

Index Number of the Dominion Bureau of Statistics	Year	Median*	Interquartile** Range	Percentage Which Interquartile Range Is Of Median***
102	1914	100	15	15
110	1915	104	22	21
132	1916	123	42	34
179	1917	169	75	44
199	1918	195	80	41
209	1919	207	70	34
244	1920	232	77	33
172	1921	168	56	33
152	1922	151	48	32
153	1923	152	56	37
155	1924	153	56	37
160	1925	160	56	35

* The median represents the price ratio of that commodity in the middle of the array of 232 commodities used in the calculations of the price index.

** The interquartile range represents the range around the median into which the price ratios of half the commodities used in the calculation of the price index fall.

*** The percentage which interquartile range is of median indicates significant fluctuations of prices.

Source:

V. W. Bladen and A. F. W. Plumptre, "An Analysis of Prices and Price Indexes in Canada; 1913-1925", Canadian Historical Review, Vol. VIII (Sept., 1927), pp. 243-246.

Appendix # 4

Number of Unemployed Expressed as a Percentage of Total
Trade Union Membership: 1915 - 1921*

	1915	1916	1917	1918	1919	1920	1921
January 31	----	----	----	----	3.94	4.28	13.07
February 28	----	----	----	----	5.61	4.33	16.12
March 31	----	----	2.16	1.68	5.62	3.44	16.48
April 30	----	----	----	----	4.38	2.83	16.27
May 31	----	----	----	----	3.83	2.88	15.46
June 30	----	2.1	1.25	.50	2.57	2.48	13.15
July 31	----	----	----	----	2.70	2.64	9.10
August 31	----	----	----	----	2.33	3.16	8.70
September 30	----	1.47	1.71	.72	2.14	3.25	8.47
October 31	----	----	----	----	2.57	5.99	7.40
November 30	----	----	----	----	3.58	10.01	11.20
December 31	8.7	2.17	2.42	2.76	4.98	13.42	15.10

* Table compiled on the basis of reports submitted by Canadian trade unions to Dominion Bureau of Statistics. Reports were quarterly as of September 30, 1916, and monthly as of January, 1919.

Appendix # 4, continuedEmployment Figures for 1919 -- Weekly Returns From
Employers of Labor**

Mar. 22	90.75	June 7	93.95	Aug. 23	98.45	Nov. 8	101.65
Mar. 29	90.38	June 14	94.80	Aug. 30	98.43	Nov. 15	102.46
Apr. 5	90.18	June 21	94.50	Sept. 6	99.27	Nov. 22	103.05
Apr. 12	90.10	June 28	95.25	Sept. 13	99.80	Nov. 29	103.10
Apr. 19	90.42	July 5	94.98	Sept. 20	100.38	Dec. 6	102.90
Apr. 26	91.05	July 12	96.04	Sept. 27	100.53	Dec. 13	102.20
May 3	92.51	July 19	96.50	Oct. 4	100.75	Dec. 20	101.88
May 10	92.53	July 26	96.46	Oct. 11	101.38	Dec. 27	99.76
May 17	93.32	Aug. 2	97.30	Oct. 18	101.68		1920
May 24	93.38	Aug. 9	97.35	Oct. 25	102.15	Jan. 3	97.86
May 31	93.67	Aug. 16	98.26	Nov. 1	102.30	Jan. 10	98.92
						Jan. 17	100.00

** Figures represent percentage of employed in relationship to total employed during base week ending on January 17, 1920.

Source:

K. B. Conn, "Employment and Unemployment in Canada: Its Measurement with Special Reference to 1919", Canadian Historical Review, Vol. VI, No. 111 (Sept., 1925), pp. 236-244.

Appendix # 5Circulation Analysis of the Edmonton Journal and Bulletin:
1918 - 1919Edmonton Bulletin: Sample of Circulation Citations

These figures represent the average combined circulations of the daily and semi-weekly editions of the paper. They are based on the average circulation during the week preceding the date of its publication. The circulations of the daily editions of the Bulletin were audited by the Audit Bureau of Circulation: those of the semi-weekly editions were not.¹

January 1, 1918	20,584	January 3, 1919	20,309
February 7, 1918	19,276	February 27, 1919	19,423
March 27, 1918	21,106	March 6, 1919	19,389
April 3, 1918	23,139	March 12, 1919	18,949
December 31, 1918	20,551	May 7, 1919	18,125

As of May 9, 1919, the Bulletin ceased its practice of publishing its average weekly circulation in a box at the top of the paper. In place of such circulation figures, small advertisements were published. Obviously, the usefulness of publicizing circulation in light of declining readership ceased to be of any benefit.

The Bulletin was unable to compete with the coverage given by the Journal to important events in the Eastern

¹Edmonton Journal, May 24, 1919. The Journal published a full page advertisement which alleged that the Bulletin misrepresented its circulation to the public.

Appendix # 5, Continued

U.S.A. and Canada and in Western Europe. It hence tended to concentrate more on local events, as it was often able to "scoop" the Journal when dealing with events occurring locally.

Edmonton Journal: Sample of Circulation Citations

These figures represent the circulation of the newspaper on the date indicated. These figures were published in boxes at the top of the first page of the Journal, and fluctuated greatly. Weekly averages were also published. All figures were audited by the Audit Bureau of Circulation. The figures listed represent extremes. The least daily circulation attained was on January 1, 1918. The greatest was for December 1, 1919. In spite of fluctuations, the large incidence of circulations greater than 22,000 in 1919 indicates the growing readership of the Journal. Weekly circulation averages, which omitted some of the extremes in readership, confirmed the trend to greater circulation.

January 1, 1918	16,709	January 1, 1919	18,694
June 28, 1918	18,046	May 29, 1919	21,514
August 5, 1918	17,175	June 28, 1919	22,918
August 31, 1918	21,128	November 18, 1919	22,739
September 4, 1918	17,055	December 1, 1919	22,923
November 7, 1918	22,400	December 27, 1919	22,917

The circulation advantage of the Journal in 1919 is

Appendix # 5, continued

confirmed by the above figures. This was important as advertising revenue was contingent upon readership. A major factor explaining the Journal's circulation advantage was the fact that, as an afternoon paper, it was better able to give Edmonton readers news about events in Eastern Canada and abroad. As part of the Southam news chain, it had access to greater sources of information than the Bulletin, and was better enabled to withstand temporary reverses in circulation.

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